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# WHY NOT TRUST THE TORIES?

by

CELTICUS

(Aneurin Bevan, M.P.)

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## INTRODUCTION

The "you" of this book is a composite person. It includes those who, like myself, are old enough to remember what happened after the last war, and those who have grown up since. If it seems to address itself more particularly, here and there, to the younger generation, it is because they are less well equipped by personal experience to meet the present political situation.

One advantage flows from the fact that the events I deal with all fall within the past twenty-six years. It should make it more difficult to practice successfully the same tricks within so short a time.



## CHAPTER I

### 1918: AFTER THE ARMISTICE

The resemblance between the political situation to-day and that at the end of the last war is extraordinary. We had carried our arms to victory and it was done under a Coalition Government representing the three great Parties in the State: Liberal, Tory and Labour. Then, as now, the country had changed its Prime Minister in the course of the war and under the same compulsions of military disaster. Lloyd George ousted Asquith as Winston Churchill ousted Neville Chamberlain. Lloyd George was idolised by the country as the architect of victory as Winston Churchill is to-day. The House of Commons, which had been elected for five years, was eight years old. The present Parliament has lasted nine years. Then, as now, the unity and fighting morale of the nation had been sustained through years of unimaginable suffering by lavish promises of a better Britain, a fairer distribution of the nation's wealth, a more generous provision for the social services, better wages and more secure employment, and a crusade against slums and insufficient houses. The war leaders knew the people were expecting the fulfilment of these promises. What, then, was uppermost in the minds of the leaders of the Tory Party? How to devise means for carrying out these pledges to the people who had fought so gallantly, so patiently and victoriously? Oh, no. These "patriotic gentlemen of England" had other fish to fry. What concerned them principally was how to exploit the situation in order to secure a Parliamentary majority for the Tory Party. Let Mr. Churchill himself bear witness to their mood. Writing of this period in his book, "The Aftermath," he said: "The Conservatives had been for thirteen years in a minority in the House of Commons. They were in a minority of about a hundred in the Parliament now to be dissolved. *On the other hand, they were sure their hour had come.* They believed the events and passions of the war had been withering in their effects on Liberal principles and ideals; they held that these had been stultified or proved visionary by all that had occurred; they knew that the quarrels between Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Asquith had



split the Liberal Party from end to end ; and finally, they knew that in the personal prestige of the Prime Minister they had an overwhelming advantage. . . . Conservative candidates were in the field throughout the constituencies. Evidently a hard line must be drawn through the midst of those who had in the main shared the efforts and sorrows of the terrible years, and the decision to have an election inevitably involved the drawing of this line. Where, then, should it be drawn? The test adopted for sitting Members was their vote on General Maurice's allegations. All who followed Mr. Asquith on that occasion were considered opponents. Translated into rough methods of electioneering this meant that even if such a Liberal Member or candidate had fought in the war, had been wounded, or lost his son, or two sons, or his brother, or had throughout in every way sustained the national cause, he must be ruled out of any share in the victory, even be accused of having impeded it. Letters were written by Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law, afterwards described in the jargon of war-time rationing as "coupons," to avowed supporters of the Coalition. These included 158 Liberal Members and candidates who followed Mr. Lloyd George and were now described as National Liberals. The rest were attacked with vigour." You see what happened? The Tories managed to discover a formula which would give them a majority of seats in the new House of Commons. From the day the new Parliament met, Lloyd George was a prisoner of this Tory majority. When the time came when he was no longer an election asset to them they threw him away like a soiled glove, as later they threw aside Ramsay MacDonald and for the same reason.

The formula for obtaining a Tory majority having been agreed, the Tories hastened to exploit the nation's gratitude to Lloyd George. Once more let Mr. Churchill bear witness: "He (that is Mr. Lloyd George) was armed with victory, complete, absolute, tremendous, victory beyond the dreams of the most ardent, the most resolute, the most exacting. The whole nation was eager to acclaim 'the pilot who had weathered the storm.' Was it wonderful that the pilot should turn away from aggrieved and resentful former associates who sourly awaited the hour of peace to call him to account . . . to the vast electorate who sought only to testify their gratitude by their votes? "

Nor was Mr. Churchill himself innocent of this conspiracy to give the Tories their chance of victory. Although then a member of the Liberal Party he was quite willing to play his part in its



murder. With complete candour he says in the same book: "To this Election I was a consulted and consenting Party. . . . Moreover, I had in the stress of war resumed intimate contact with the Conservative Party and with the friends of my youth. I therefore swam with the stream. If I had taken the opposite course it would not have made the slightest difference. But candour compels acknowledgment of this measure of responsibility."

Mr. Churchill is therefore not ill-equipped to meet the present situation. On the contrary he was an active participant in dealing with a similar situation at the end of the last war. Indeed, he is even better placed to-day, for now he is the leader of the Tories, and fills the role then occupied by Mr. Lloyd George. If his own personal history furnishes him with the knowledge of how to meet the present emergency of the Tory Party, is it not important that we should search the records so as to put the present generation on its guard?

The two first problems of how to use the post-war mood of the nation to secure political power for the Tories had been solved. They had the man to serve as decoy and they had their hundreds of adopted Tory candidates throughout the country ready to march behind him into power. But another difficulty still remained. They still needed a programme to put before the electors. It was not yet plain sailing for them. The Labour Party, in the meantime, had decided to break with the Coalition and fight the Election as an independent body. The social programme of the Labour Party was highly attractive to an electorate eager to see put into practice the promises which had been made during the war. The trade unions were in a militant mood, and they were led by men, many of whom were convinced Socialists; men like Robert Smillie, who was then the President of the powerful and aggressive miners' union. An electoral programme presented no real difficulties to the hordes of Tories behind Mr. Lloyd George. Hitler was not the first to discover that the bigger the lie the more it will serve to deceive the people. The Tories knew all about that and they proceeded to put it into effect with complete shamelessness.

They left nothing to chance. The Election was rushed whilst the mood of exaltation following the victory still ran like a heady wine in the veins of the people. No time must be permitted for reflection. Certainly no time must be afforded the Labour Party now trying for the first time to challenge the Tories on a nationwide scale. The attack on the emotions of the people was pre-



pared with a skill far exceeding what the same men had shown in the war. The first tocsin to be sounded was the need to maintain the same national unity which had served so well in the war years. Appropriately enough it was the Archbishop of Canterbury who was selected to give an odour of sanctity to the Tory plot. Preaching in Westminster Abbey on November 10th, 1918, the Archbishop delivered himself of the following appeal: "Ours is indeed a great and living hope for our own and other lands. The war, which perforce cut rudely across our ordinary life and suspended countless things for good or ill, has obliterated many a barrier and sundering line, and men who had little in common have learned to know and understand each other as never before. Is that experience to be barren of fruit? Are we to drift unheedingly or helplessly into dangers that need not be? God forbid. Are we even to slip back quietly into the prosaic paths of pre-war days? We need something; we shall secure something nobler, worthier, larger than that." Thus with this ecclesiastical benediction the Coalition's appeal was launched on the country. The Church had shown the way. It remained for the devout to follow. That was the 10th of November. On the 13th the Prime Minister himself took up the tale. He said: "... we must instantly take in hand an improvement of the conditions of the people." He spoke of the need of a great housing programme and the necessity to bring light and beauty into the lives of the people. He said, and this appears to be one of the first occasions on which he used the magic slogan which was to be the keynote of the Election, "We must have habitations fit for the heroes who have won this war."

Winston Churchill had already jumped into action with a speech calling for the setting aside of all selfish and class interests. On November the 9th Churchill said: "Victory will be absolutely barren if we are not able to bring our soldiers quickly home to active conditions of industry and employment; if we are not able to deal fairly and reasonably and in such manner as to leave no legitimate feeling of soreness or resentment behind with the great mass of men and women, particularly women, upon whose faithful endeavours year after year the unexampled output of munitions for the British armies has been based."

"We owe it to the soldiers, whose extraordinary martial achievements have rendered victory possible, to make good arrangements that will secure their position on their return to



their native land, and I cannot think that any question of class or trade union interests, or of vested interests of capital or of party politics, will be allowed to stand in the way of a concerted effort by all forces in the nation to achieve that result. . . .

"It seems to me that when the war comes to an end a great demand will arise for commodities. We know what followed the war of 1870, small though that war was in comparison with this one. The immense demand for commodities of all kinds necessitates a keen demand for labour in order to repair the wastage of the war and the ruin which it wrought. We have only to look over the great countries whose means of production have been so largely impaired, and whose conditions will for some time be so precarious, to see what a splendid opportunity is offered to our vigorous intact economic organisation to meet their needs and at the same time re-establish our industrial position. Therefore I say, I cannot see that, granted loyalty, granted earnest effort, granted absence of useless faction or of selfish class interests in any direction by Labour or by Capital, we have not got an extremely manageable proposition in our hands. . . . What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world then comes a cropper over demobilisation?" You see even in those days he knew all the words. We shall hear them all again, but they will be much better this time for he has had more practice since then, and they will be all the more seductively dangerous if only because he has used that same mastery of language in a worthier cause.

The ground having thus been prepared, on November the 18th Lloyd George opened the Election campaign. He made just that plea for unity in national reconstruction and for the abolition of all Opposition with which we have been made so familiar recently. All that was required was to carry the comradeship of the trenches into political life and all would be well. "There are times," he declared, "when an opposition is essential to good government, but that is when politics are so dull, so unexciting, that but for party no one would take the slightest interest in them. But when you have great gigantic tasks that will affect not merely the structure of the Empire and the fate of the World, but which come home to every man in his own household and workshop, in the life and health of his children, you really do not want a strong Opposition. This is the time rather for the criticism of experts, not of partisans. Opposition is organised fault finding. . . . We cannot return to the old conditions. If you do not sow, weeds will grow. That Labour,



which is vitally interested in reconstruction, should withdraw its members from the Government at a time of reconstruction is the height of folly."

It is pitiful, looking back now to see how trustfully men and women believed that the appalling sacrifices of the war would not be in vain. Those who had survived the awful slaughter saw themselves as trustees for those who had been killed or maimed. They were consequently all the more helplessly exposed to an assault on their emotions which appealed to them to be true to that trust. On November the 19th *The Times* newspaper printed a poem of which the following is a stanza :

And us they trusted : we the task inherit,  
The unfinished task for which their lives were spent ;  
But leaving us a portion of their spirit  
They gave their witness and they died content,  
Full well they knew they could not build without us  
That better country, faint and far described,  
God's own true England : but they did not doubt us—  
And in that faith they died.

The Tories were not ashamed to condemn in the most definite terms the conditions they themselves had created. It is their established practice to show their awareness of the results of poverty and then to ask for a Coalition, thus making sure that nothing can be done about them. The young Tory Reformers are playing the same trick at the present time. Listen to what Sir Auckland Geddes said about conditions in 1918. He had been National Service Minister in the War Government. He asked was industrial unrest surprising? His wonder was that there had not been a revolution years ago, because the prevalence of tuberculosis and epilepsy testified to bad housing, insufficient feeding, insufficient light, air, sleep and recreation and reflected in the most dreadful way on our whole life as a nation.

He had a dream—it might be a foolish dream, but it was with him—that out of the parties which were we should form a centre party, or as it had been called, a "Commonwealth" party to think only of the common weal of the Empire, or alliance of nations.

Is it surprising the people really believed something was at last going to be seriously attempted when language like that was used by a Tory Minister?

On November the 22nd the new Coalition issued its Manifesto. The following is an extract:—

"The care of the soldiers and sailors, officers and men, whose



heroism has won for us this great deliverance, and who return to civil life, is a primary obligation of patriotism, and the Government will endeavour to assist such members of the armed forces of the Crown as may desire to avail themselves of facilities for special industrial training under conditions worthy of their services to the country. Plans have been prepared. Land for cottages with small gardens or allotments or small holdings with grants to assist in training and initial equipment. . . . The principal concern of every Government is, and must be, the conditions of the great mass of the people who live by manual toil. The steadfast spirit of our workers, displayed on all the wide field of action opened out by the war, in the trenches, on the ocean, in the air, in field, mine and factory, has left an imperishable mark on the heart and conscience of the nation. One of the first tasks of the Government will be to deal on broad and comprehensive lines with the housing of the people, which during the war has fallen so sadly into arrears and upon which the well-being of the nation so largely depends. Larger opportunities for education, improved material conditions and the prevention of degrading standards of employment."

With the publication of the Manifesto the Election Campaign was in full spate. Every instrument of mass suggestion was employed to induce the electors to cast their votes for the Coalition candidates. From newspaper, pulpit and platform poured a ceaseless bombardment of advice and exhortation, all designed to smother every whisper of criticism and mobilise the people into a uniform mass of Coalition supporters. (To that formidable armament of political propaganda is now added the radio, the most dangerous of all weapons of political warfare.)

Is it any wonder that the people succumbed? Millions of them were voting for the first time in their lives, and even those with electoral experience had this partly expunged from their memories by the drama of the war years which had intervened. Then, again, the emotions of the electors were fully exposed to the attack. The men they were asked to trust had led them through the most terrible ordeal in British history. They had already trusted these men with their lives. Was it not reasonable now to trust them with their votes? Only the defences of political sophistication and trained intelligence could have protected them against such a barrage of appeal. Furthermore, the man they were mainly asked to trust was the most seductive orator of his generation, and he had behind him, in the years immediately before the war, a sound political record in the



development of the social services and in attacks on the landlords. Mr. Lloyd George pulled out every stop in the organ of his oratory. *The Times* of November the 25th, 1918, reported the following speech by him: "What is our task? To make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in. (Cheers.) I am not using the word heroes in any spirit of boastfulness, but in a spirit of humble recognition of the fact. I cannot think of what these men have gone through. I have been there at the door of the furnace and witnessed it, but that is not being in it, and I saw them march into the furnace. There are millions of men who will come back. Let us make this a land fit for such men to live in. (Cheers.) There is no time to lose. I want us to take advantage of this new spirit. Don't let us waste this victory merely in ringing joybells. Let us make victory the motive power to link the old land up in such measure that it will be nearer the sunshine than ever before, and at any rate that it will lift those who have been living in the dark places to a plateau where they will get the rays of the sun."

But already suspicions had been aroused at the spectacle of the hordes of hard-faced business men who had been adopted as Coalition candidates in the constituencies. It was perceived that they were almost all Tories, and many were asking themselves how it was possible for the new world to be ushered in by such a lot. Speaking in Wolverhampton on November 25th Lloyd George answered these suspicions. The task of the new Government, he said, would be to make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in. Millions of lives had been lost in the war but there were millions more of maimed lives due to atrocious social conditions. That must be put right. . . . Slums were not fit homes for men who had won this war. Next to housing was the question of the land. The land was the place on which to grow strong men. Prejudices must be swept aside and it was vested prejudices that he feared more than vested interests. The State must make grants for the purchase and equipment of holdings. . . . He (Lloyd George) deprecated the idea that he was likely to be hampered by Unionist reactionaries. Reactionaries were not confined to one party. He had known some of the worst in his own party and the Labour Party was not without them. Deadheads and cranks were no party monopoly. The war had been won by the unity of classes and sacrifice of people of every rank. Let the country in the coming weeks show that its patriotism was not exhausted.

Where the carrion is there the vultures forgather. Sir John



Simon hastened to the feast. His election address declared: "It is not to politicians, but to our fighting men and to those who have endured years of sacrifice and anxiety in the homes that the victory is due, and the first duty of the new Parliament will be to see that the country pays its debts to those to whom we owe everything. . . . I look forward to supporting every proposal of the Prime Minister which is calculated to improve the health, happiness and comfort of the masses of the people."

Sir Auckland Geddes had now been made President of the Board of Trade, and in that capacity he felt able to assure the country that plans were already far advanced to carry out their promises. His Election Address contained the following: "It must never again be a reproach to our country that it was indifferent to the sacrifices of the men who served in the Forces. We shall repay our debt to them cheerfully by supporting the dependents of those who have died, by providing for the maimed, wounded and discharged soldiers, sailors and airmen on their return to civil life. For those who wish for small holdings or other facilities for working on the land, plans are ready. To me, as President of the Local Government Board, has been given the high honour of directing the national effort for health and housing."

Scotland offered a peculiar problem to the leaders of the Coalition. The Independent Labour Party was particularly strong in Scotland, and the dense industrial population of the Clyde was deeply sceptical of the claims of the queer apostles of the New Jerusalem. So for Scotland was reserved the most definite arguments, the most concrete commitments, and the biggest lies. Bonar Law, the leader of the Tory Party, made a speech in Glasgow which is worth recording, for it reveals all the tricks by which the Tories beguile the ignorant. The Clyde Socialists even then were pointing out that the Tories were using Lloyd George for their own purposes, and that their new-found interest in social reforms was an election dodge. You will note how Bonar Law claimed the reactionaries in his own Party to be a minority, just as to-day the Tory Social Reformers are being built up to delude our own generation. *The Times* of November 26th, 1918, reported Bonar Law thus: "He talked of improving health and housing standards, providing employment in industry through increased production, or land settlement for ex-soldiers." Then continued: "I doubt very much if there is any political party that would take much exception to our aims as I have stated them. How far will they be carried



out in practice? Well, there is a question I cannot answer. But I do say this. I have seen it suggested on the one hand that Mr. Lloyd George has sold himself to the Tories. (Laughter.) Well, I should be rather afraid of my purchase. (Renewed laughter.) On the other hand, it is said that we are all reactionaries, that this new-born interest in social questions is simply put on in order to buy Mr. Lloyd George. Well, that is not quite true. I asked my secretary yesterday to look out some of my old speeches and find out something I had said on this subject when I was still a Party Leader and nothing else. He got this extract—he could have got dozens of others—I really think it is worth reading: ‘In the same way inevitably in the Conservative Party we must have those who are essentially reactionary, who think that the world is perfectly good as it is, and who do not desire to make any improvements. That element must always be in our party, but it would be a fatal day for the party and a bad thing for the country if it ever became the dominating influence. We are not satisfied with the world as it is. Just as Disraeli preached that the Conservative Party should be a National Party, he teaches us also that it should always have before it this ideal, to raise the condition of the mass of the people of this country. This should and must be our ideal.’”

He continued: “I have not changed except in one respect. . . . I think it is possible that there is now an opportunity such as has never occurred in our history before, of doing quickly, without disturbance, what in ordinary circumstances it would take generations to do. I think that is possible.”

So there you have it. The leading Tory of that time conceding there were many reactionaries in his Party, conceding that he himself before the war had seen progress if it had to come at all as limping slowly, decades, centuries, required to do anything much. But note where his demagogic skill lies. The war, he claimed, had brought a change of heart to him and many others. The progressives were in the ascendancy and speedy social advances could come in the immediate post-war years. What more could men and women ask for? If the Tories were to be taken at their word, common suffering and sacrifice had made a new moral climate in Britain. They asked not to be judged on their pre-war acts but on their wartime conversion to belief in the need for rapid social and economic progress. But it was reserved for Winston Churchill himself to come nearest to definite pledges of Socialist legislation. The workers of Dundee were not



to be put off by vague phrases. They wanted something more definite. In particular they were not satisfied merely to be told that Royal Commissions and Committees of Inquiry would be held to investigate the possibility of reform. In obedience to their questions Winston Churchill let his imagination soar, and committed himself to radical promises. There is no evidence in the records that he made the slightest effort afterwards to make good his promises, and when he faced a Dundee election audience at a subsequent election he was badly beaten in the most bitter contest of his career. This is what he said in Dundee, speaking on December 11th, 1918: "We have got to do something on a bigger scale than ever before. The three great factors are land, communications and power and the three children, food, housing and manufacture. So long as the railways are in private hands they may be used for private profit. We cannot organise the great questions of land settlement, new industries and the extension of production unless the State has the control of transportation. . . ."

Asked whether a Commission of Inquiry would be instituted before the railways were nationalised, Mr. Churchill said: "I cannot say, but I think it is highly improbable that action can be delayed until a Royal Commission has wandered about. A great mass of information is already available and already a large portion of the task has automatically accomplished itself."

A quarter of a century has gone by since then, and in that period Winston Churchill has held high office, including four years as a Prime Minister. But the railways are still in private hands. So is power and land.

Well, the plot succeeded. The Coalition was elected by an unprecedented majority. They obtained 533 seats in the new House. All the people could do they had done. They had given the leaders whom they trusted all the political power required to carry through the most drastic legislative programme. The tiny Labour Opposition, less than 60 members, was helpless to hinder—which obviously they would not want to do—any plans the Government might make to give effect to their election pledges. The country sat back and waited for the redemption of the promises. What they actually got is on record.

It is interesting to note that even that vast majority did not satisfy the Tories. They needed one more victory to make them happy. They needed the co-operation of Labour in their Government so as to accomplish the moral as well as the material defeat of the Socialist alternative. If they could make Labour a party



so the betrayal of the country their victory would be complete, for Labour would then be tarred with the same brush. Immediately after the Election *The Times* Parliamentary Correspondent wrote: "There is reason to believe that the Prime Minister does not despair of securing the services of responsible Labour leaders in his new Government. He will almost certainly invite the Labour Party to reconsider their decisions to withdraw from participation in the conclusion of the peace settlement and the work of reconstruction. The response of organised Labour will be waited with anxious eagerness. Labour, it must be remembered, has shed completely its Left wing, and that in itself is the best omen for future co-operation with the Coalition in the discharge of national obligations."

It will therefore be seen that every incident of the pattern of the present day was first gone through in 1918. Nothing is missing. Many of the names even are the same. Mr. Winston Churchill rehearsed his present rôle in that period, and you will see how well fitted he is to play it in the speeches with which he, in his turn, is trying to obtain the support of Labour in a second great betrayal of the people. For to-day, as then, the Tories are faced with a crisis. Once more the expectations of the people are awakened. Once more their hopes are built up for a fundamental and equitable reconstruction of society. Once more the soldiers, sailors and airmen are coming home eager to enjoy the reward of their valour, their sufferings and their sacrifices. And once more the problem of the Tories is the same—how to ride the crisis, how to lie, deceive, cajole and buy time so as once more to snatch a reprieve for wealth and privilege.

But even with the attainment of such a Parliamentary majority the Tories of 1918 were not able to sit comfortably in the saddle. During the war the workers had achieved great industrial strength and they were not prepared tamely to accept the verdict of an Election obtained by such methods. The miners in particular were on the warpath and among the tiny Labour Party returned to the House of Commons they had the strongest single representation. The Tories now turned their attention to breaking the industrial militancy of the masses, beginning with the miners. Our education in Tory methods would not be complete if we did not examine how they set about it.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE BETRAYAL OF THE MINERS

In the last war, as in this, the mines were brought under national control. Coal is so basic to the industries of the country that its production could not be left to the unbridled avarice of the coal owners. So monstrously did they seek to exploit the war demand for increased quantities of coal that the Government had to step in and take control of the industry. The attitude of the miners was in striking contrast. They demonstrated their appreciation of the national emergency by an immediate reaction. They enlisted in such large numbers before conscription was introduced that thousands had to be brought back from the trenches to produce coal. The patriotism of the coal owners could not resist the temptation to make fat profits out of the national danger.

With the introduction of national control and fixed profits the greed of the coal owners found another outlet. They deliberately developed the poorer seams and kept the richer seams in reserve to exploit when restriction would no longer limit their profits. No miner could be ignorant of this, and the knowledge of it remains to this day, a permanent source of embitterment in the industry.

It is difficult now fully to appreciate the atmosphere of that time. A mood of universal optimism existed about the possibilities of great social advance. As I have already shown, this had been fed by the lavish promises held out at the Khaki Election. In addition, working class circles had been electrified by the Russian Revolution which had overthrown the most autocratic Government in Europe. Furthermore, the Army was seething with revolt and even the police were organising a police union. The position of the Government was therefore precarious in the extreme despite its obese Parliamentary majority. Every artifice of political craft was necessary if property was to ride the crisis. The Tories proved equal to the occasion.

In the middle of January, 1919, the miners held a national



Conference at Southport. The Conference agreed to put forward four demands:—

- (1) Full maintenance for demobilised and unemployed miners.
- (2) An amendment of the so-called "Eight-Hours Act" to read "six" for "eight" (which would really be a seven-hours day).
- (3) Nationalisation of all mines and minerals (which by an earlier conference decision included control by the workers as part of any scheme of nationalisation).
- (4) 30 per cent. advance on earnings, exclusive of war wage.

To these the Government replied by offering a Committee of Inquiry and a shilling a day. The miners decided upon a strike ballot. The result of the ballot was 615,164 for the strike and 105,082 against; a majority for the strike of over half a million. The strike notices were to take effect on March 15th. The Government, realising the seriousness of the situation, could no longer dilly-dally. On February 24th the Prime Minister introduced a Bill into the House of Commons providing for the setting up of a Statutory Commission. This is what Mr. Lloyd George said in moving the Bill:—

"A Royal Commission will not answer the purpose. A Royal Commission would not have the necessary powers to command the attendance of witnesses, to compel them to give evidence, or to force them to produce all the documents which are relevant to the inquiry. For that reason we have decided to have a Statutory Commission with the authority of Parliament behind it. The terms of reference will cover wages and hours of work, inequalities between grades, the cost of production and the distribution of coal, and the general organisation of the coalfield and the industry as a whole.

"That will cover questions like joint control. I see that the coal owners have gone very far in their reply towards meeting that demand, but whether they have gone far enough it is not for me to express an opinion. It is no use setting up a Commission and then pre-judging it by expressing opinions on subjects of that kind. They can inquire into the question of nationalisation, as to whether that would produce economy in the coalfields, or whether it would produce even greater waste. All these questions can be examined and ought to be examined:—

"'Selling prices and profits in the coal industry.' So that the whole question of profiteering may be examined.



“ ‘The social conditions under which colliery workers carry out their industry.’ That would cover housing.

“ Any scheme that may be submitted to or formulated by the Commissioners for the future organisation of the coal industry, whether on the present basis or on the basis of joint control, nationalisation, or any other basis.

“ The effect of proposals under the above heads upon the industry.

“ The effect of proposals under the above heads upon the development of the coal industry and the economic life of the country.

“ If the miners—and I feel certain they will—act in a spirit of toleration towards other industries which are so vitally affected, of consideration for the special difficulties of this country, with its gigantic burden—a country for which hundreds of thousands of their men fought so valiantly and so well—they will find that, as the result of this Inquiry, in my judgment, they will get a Miners’ Charter which will be the beginning of greater and better things for them, and if they do so, and throw themselves into this Inquiry and present their case—in some respects, as I know, irresistible, in others requiring undoubtedly some greater proof than I have seen up to the present, but I am not prejudiced—they will achieve great things for their industry and for the men whom they so ably lead, and will have the satisfaction, when they have got these things, of knowing that they have obtained them without inflicting any hurt upon hundreds of thousands of other men and women engaged in honest toil like themselves.”

The Tories laid their plans with unscrupulous ingenuity. Their plan of attack was to take the miners’ proposals in detail, by means of a series of Interim Reports. Their first difficulty was to convince the miners of their sincerity, for there was widespread scepticism in the coalfields. The miners had a healthy and natural distrust of Commissions. They regarded them as face-saving and stalling devices. The Government said to them, give us a fortnight in which to prove to you that we do mean business this time. Postpone the operation of your strike notices until the end of March. In the meantime the Commission will start its work and you will be able to judge of the possibilities arising from it and of our intentions, by what we do with the first Reports. Despite their suspicions the miners agreed and the Commission was set up with the following representatives:—



Hon. Mr. Justice Sankey (in the Chair).

*Labour Side.*

Mr. Robert Smillie  
Mr. Herbert Smith  
Mr. Frank Hodges  
Sir Leo Chiozza Money

*Agreed between Government  
and Miners*

Mr. R. H. Tawney  
Mr. Sidney Webb

*Employers' Side*

Mr. Arthur Balfour } Govern-  
Sir Arthur Duckham } ment  
Sir Thomas Royden } nominees

*Coal Owners*

Mr. Evan Williams  
Mr. R. W. Cooper  
Mr. M. J. Forgie

The stage was set. The conclusion of the first act pleased the miners beyond anything they had ever experienced in the history of the industry. Their expectations were raised to the highest pitch. At last, or so it seemed, justice was to be done, not only to them, but to the national interest as well. The first Interim Sankey Report made the following recommendations, and these, in accordance with the promise already given, were in the hands of the Government by March 20th.

It recommended, among other items, an immediate increase of two shillings a day for all adult miners, reduction of hours from eight to seven, and then went on to say: "*Even upon the evidence already given, the present system of ownership and working in the coal industry stands condemned, and some other system must be substituted for it, either nationalisation, or a method of unification by national purchase and/or by joint control.*" Throughout the coalfields the miners were asking anxiously, "Will the Government accept the recommendations?" Their fears were set at rest. It is important to remember that it was Bonar Law, the leader of the Tories, from whom they needed guarantees. They fully realised it was he and not Mr. Lloyd George who had the real power in the House of Commons, just as later, in 1931, it was Stanley Baldwin, and not the decoy Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, who was the master of the political situation. Mr. Bonar Law did not scruple about pledging his honour. Speaking in Parliament on February 24th he said:—

"When my Hon. and Rt. Hon. friends opposite say will you accept the principle of nationalisation I say, if on inquiry it is found to be the best thing for the community, then I unhesitatingly say of course I accept the principle of nationalisation. . . . The Government desires to go into the matter to see if it is a good business proposition. If it is that I accept it. If it is proved to be a national detriment rather than a national advan-



tage I will oppose it. There the position stands. I should have thought that anyone who desired to do merely what was best for the country, the proposal of the Government was best, namely, that the whole question should be thrashed out, with expert evidence, expert opinion, expert knowledge, before a highly efficient tribunal. So far for nationalisation."

There you have it. Verbose, shifty and indirect certainly, as befitted a man with a lie in his heart, but if language means anything, that statement meant he was prepared to accept the findings of the tribunal set up by himself if it found in favour of nationalisation. The miners had from him an even more specific statement. On March 21st—that is the day after receiving the first Interim Report of the Commission—he wrote to Robert Smillie, the Chairman of the miners, as follows:—

"11, Downing Street,  
Whitehall.

Dear Sir,

21st March, 1919.

Speaking in the House of Commons I made a statement in regard to the Government policy in connection with the Report of the Coal Industry Commission. I have pleasure in confirming, as I understand you wish me to do, my statement that the Government are prepared to carry out in the spirit and the letter the recommendations of Sir John Sankey's Report.

Yours faithfully,

A. BONAR LAW.

The miners were jubilant. Once more they were balloted on whether they would accept this new situation. In the largest vote ever recorded they voted by thirteen to one to accept the Interim Report and await the further findings of the Commission on the question of nationalisation of mines and minerals. They had every reason to feel confidence in the fidelity of the Government. Not only had they obtained an immediate increase in wages and a reduction in the working day, but private ownership in the mining industry had been condemned, and the Commission was now proceeding to investigate what to put in its place. A general atmosphere of optimism and goodwill prevailed throughout the coalfields, and this was shared by the rest of the country. Following the lead of the Government the newspapers were loud in their praises for the statesmanship of the miners' leaders who had been wise enough to oppose the strike and put their faith in an impartial investigation of the facts.

Then followed one of the most extraordinary series of public sittings ever held by a public tribunal. Day after day coal



owners, royalty owners, coal distributors and exporters, coal consumers, both domestic and industrial, were cross-examined so thoroughly and efficiently that universal admiration was felt for the work of the Commission and particularly for the keenness and ability of the miners' representatives. Day after day the newspapers carried banner headlines reporting the exposures of inefficient mining, exorbitant royalties and shocking housing conditions in the mining districts. Never have the deficiencies of private enterprise in a great industry been so thoroughly exposed, and so publicly.

Writing about it at the time a commentator said: "As the Commission proceeded it became less and less a cold inquiry and took on the aspect of an open trial of private capitalism in the coal mining industry." Private enterprise in coal mining was having its chance to justify itself before the bar of public opinion and it was failing. The Tory champions of property were alarmed. What had been started as a conspiracy to blunt the edge of the miners' industrial militancy was turning into a weapon against the coal owners themselves. Something had to be done about it. The man entrusted with the task was no other than the same Sir Auckland, whom I have already quoted as having been shocked—before the General Election—by the condition of the poor. Suddenly, without warning, he put up the price of coal by six shillings a ton and blamed the need for it on reduced coal output. Remember the shorter working day had not yet come into operation, so it could not be blamed on that. (There is a sharp parallel between then and now. A few months ago this Government also put up the price of coal by 4 shillings a ton, blaming it also on the fall in coal production and rise in miners' wages, thus making the miners the whipping boy for the coal owners. The Government must have taken Sir Auckland for a model.) In 1919, however, the miners' representatives challenged the case for the increase at once. In the subsequent Debate in the House of Commons, Mr. Bonar Law made another subtle move to place the miners in a false position. "All this is a question," he said, "of what is best for the country, and I say to my right hon. friends that if they can see an equivalent for the dangers I see in delay they can say to me on the floor of the House, 'If you postpone this (that is the six shillings increase) for three months, we will join with you and put our backs into it to increase the output, and during that time there will be a period of suspense, and there will be no strikes or stoppages for three months,' I would be inclined to accept



it, and I think the Government would do so also. I think that is a fair offer." You would gather from that speech that the miners were really responsible for the coal industry and not the coal owners. The same language is used to-day and for the same purpose, of making the miner the scapegoat for the defects of private enterprise.

The millionaire Press was incited to take up the running against the miners and prepare the atmosphere for the Great Betrayal that was to follow. On June 20th the Majority Sankey Report had recommended the nationalisation of coal mines and minerals, and the Government's decision was expected. The miners gave a dignified and reasoned rejoinder to the six shillings rise. At their Annual Conference they declared: "This Annual Conference of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, having heard the report of the Miners' Members of Parliament upon the discussion of the proposal of the Government to raise the price of coal by six shillings a ton, declares that such an increase is unnecessary and should be avoided. It regards the problem as one of coal production only, and it is of the opinion that production can only be increased to the point which would make the industry self-supporting, without additional charges to the consumer, if the economies set forth in the Interim Sankey Report are accepted, and the recommendation of the majority of the Commissioners as to an immediate change of ownership and control in the mining industry passed into law. It therefore informs the Government that it is prepared to co-operate with them to the fullest extent to put such economies into effect and such recommendations into law." The Government took no notice of the offer and the increase in price took effect from July 21st. In the meantime meetings had been held in various parts of the country addressed by captains of industry like Lord Inchcape and Lord Leverhulme, all attacking the Report of the Commission and calling on the Government to reject it. The stage was now set for the second act.

On August 18th, 1919, the Prime Minister made a speech in which he stated categorically that the Government rejected the majority findings of the Commission for the nationalisation of the mining industry. He promised unification by means of large groupings under private ownership and the nationalisation of mining royalties. Even those minor changes were not carried out. In the Debate which followed the Labour spokesmen bitterly accused the Government of a breach of faith. The



speech of Vernon Hartshorn summed up the attitude of the miners, and it is worth while giving a substantial portion of it for it throws a prophetic light on what has happened in the coal industry since.

Mr. Hartshorn: "When the miners of the country know tomorrow that they have been duped, and that is really what the statement amounts to (Hon. Members: 'No!') they will know they have been deceived. (Hon. Members: 'No!'). We did not ask for a Commission. We accepted it. We gave evidence before it. Why was the Commission set up? Was it a huge game of bluff? Was it never intended that if the Reports favoured nationalisation we were to get it? Why was the question sent at all to the Commission? That is the kind of question the miners of the country will ask, and they will say, 'We have been deceived, betrayed, duped.' The Prime Minister told us this evening that there were over 1,141,000 men in the mines and that we should get about 200,000,000 tons of coal per year. Since the six shillings was put on output had gone down, and is continually going down. I say after the declaration of this policy it will go down further to ruin. (Hon. Members: 'Shame' and 'Order, order!') It does not in the least matter whether you cry 'Shame' or not. If it is to be a fact it is as well that you should know it—you people who have been bringing pressure to bear upon the Government. The shame will be with you when the position comes home to the miners of the country, and they will not in the least mind whether you say 'Shame' or not. If we are not to have a definite difference in the mining industry than in the past, then the miners will not produce on the same terms as they have produced hitherto. Why, even the Duckham Report, which proposed to set up these trusts, suggested some sort of limitation of profit. The Prime Minister did not even think it necessary to tell us whether or not he is going to limit profits. (An Hon. Member: 'Profiteering!') But, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, I will not go more fully into the matter than to say this: that since the Armistice—and only since then—the output has been going down.

During the War the Miners' Executive co-operated with the Government—the Prime Minister knows that as well as anybody. We were asked to work harder—on Sundays, holidays and extra days, per week—to work six days per week instead of five, as had been the practice for years—to maintain the output, and so to meet the need of the nation. All that will not be counted—



other industries and employment was available elsewhere the miners deserted the mines in huge numbers and did their utmost to persuade their sons not to go into the pits. The industry contracted and contracted. In 1913, 286,000,000 tons of coal were produced in this country. Each succeeding year tells the same story of continual decline, and by 1943 production had fallen to 196,000,000 tons. Men leave the industry when they can and young men refuse to enter it. The industry is dying at the roots and the country is paying for it not only in lack of coal but in an extortionate price for both industrial and domestic fuel; indeed, so high that its maintenance at its present level will threaten industrial recovery after the war.

Yes, the Tories won. Their success is so obvious that the young men of to-day have to be recruited for the pits by a threat of imprisonment. The owners now man their pits by slave labour. Industrial slavery is the price of Tory success. Let the Minister of Fuel and Power (by an exquisite irony it is the son of Lloyd George) comment on the balance sheet. Speaking in the House of Commons on July 13th, 1944, he said: "... in 1943 less than 50,000 youths below eighteen were in the mines, compared with over 70,000 in 1938. Further, at the present time, juvenile recruitment is running at the rate of 11,000 against a national gross wastage of nearly forty thousand. It is not necessary for me to drive home the lesson of those figures."

Yes, the Tories won. Who lost?

### CHAPTER 3

#### DEATH BY WORDS

I have told how the Tories managed to ride the crisis at the end of the last war. Were the people of that time too easily deceived? Are you better equipped now to see through the deceptions which will be used to dupe you when this war is over? It all happened then so quickly, and that is how the Tories will try to make it happen this time. Between the Khaki Election of 1918 and the disintegration of the workers' industrial vanguard, represented by the Miners, was only eight months. Yet this short time sufficed to give the Tories another quarter of a century of political and economic power. As I have tried to



show you, after the last war people had every reason to trust the promises made to them. The Tories found out first what was in their hearts, then used the right words to express it. You remember the old saw children sometimes chant at each other when they quarrel:—"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Nothing could be more wrong than that. Words have a terrible power to hurt people. Indeed, words are probably the most powerful things in the world. That is why the masters of words are so often the masters of nations. When people hear the right words they are apt to think that the right actions will follow. It is quite natural for them to do so. After all, it is only by words that we can express our intentions, and life would soon become unbearable if we always distrust what people say. It is no use merely deciding not to believe the promises of politicians and turning your back on politics. All that happens if you do that, is that you become the blind victim of other peoples' decisions. The Tories would like you to take that attitude more than any other for then they could do what they like and visit the consequences on you. Like everything else, politics have to be understood to be practiced intelligently. Before I finish I hope to show why it is impossible for Tories to carry out the promises they make so lavishly. They make the promise in order to keep power. It is never their intention to get power in order to keep the promise. Honest politics and Tory politics are contradictions in terms. Lying is a necessary part of a Tory's political equipment, for it is essential for him to conceal his real intentions from the people. This is partly the reason for his success in keeping power. He is able to give his mind coldly and detachedly to the art of politics, for his emotions are never involved in what he is telling you. That was why he was able to trap the men and women of 1914-19. A perfect example of how the Tory is able to find the word which admirably expresses what the people feel was given by Mr. Bonar Law in the Election of 1922. You are entitled to know about that, for you naturally ask why it was the electors of 1918 did not learn from the events I have described and turn out the Tories the first chance they had. That chance came in the 1922 Election. But the Tories once more proved equal to the occasion. You will remember that the Government which was elected in December, 1918, was a Coalition, and the Prime Minister was Mr. Lloyd George. Of course, in reality the House of Commons was full of Tory business men, but the presence of Lloyd George at the top



helped to conceal that fact from the people. Its policies were Tory, but its title was Coalition. In 1922 the full consequences of these policies were visited upon the people. The hectic trade boom following the war had given place to widespread depression. Unemployment was mounting rapidly in the basic industries of coal, shipbuilding, steel, engineering, etc. Hundreds of thousands of ex-Servicemen were walking the streets and queuing up outside the employment exchanges, hoping for the work which wasn't to be had. Ex-officers who had been encouraged to take small-holdings and start poultry farms were ruined. Mr. Lloyd George's reputation—which had stood so high at the termination of the war—was now tarnished by the policies to which the Tories had persuaded him to lend his name. In these circumstances the Tories struck, ruthlessly and after careful preparation. They demanded the end of the Coalition and the resumption of party politics. By thus attacking the Coalition they sought to wipe out their own responsibility for it. It had served its purpose in providing them with four years of power. They now wanted to bury it and so give the impression of a new start and a clean sheet. They plotted against Lloyd George and prevailed on Bonar Law to politically assassinate his old chief. Like the gentleman he was, Bonar Law found no difficulty in doing so. The Coalition was broken and the Tory Party was ready to face the Election under its own steam. But they still needed the right slogan, the right word to seduce the electors. Bonar Law gave it them. What the country needed, he said, was "tranquillity." You see the devilish cunning of it?

The country was tired of excitement, bled white by four and a half years of slaughter, racked by industrial strife, and its faith in the efficacy of political action by Government, undermined by broken promises. Thus the Tories hastened to exploit the psychology they themselves had created. "Tranquillity" ideally expressed what the people thought they needed. They were invited to turn their backs on collective action and leave the job to the Tories. The plot succeeded. The Tories swept the country. They retained power once more and the people got lower wages, savage cuts in all the social services and mass unemployment. They got political "tranquillity" all right at the price of domestic impoverishment.

The same trick, you see, but always played with variations, and it is so hard for ordinary men and women to see the old device beneath the new trappings.



It is now necessary for us to turn our attention to what they will do this time, to snare you as they snared before. But if you keep in mind what I have already described it should be easier for you to avoid betrayal than it was when there was no such glaring precedents in men's minds. All I can do is to show you the map of present-day politics and explain it to you. If afterwards you lose your way, you will have only yourself to blame.

Now I propose to show you the new Tory technique; it is how to talk an idea to death; how to drown the idea of a great reform in a cascade of publicity, how to use the modern technique of publicity, not for the purpose of winning support for a principle, but in order to exhaust public interest in it so that people weary of it, and so that the mention of it no longer evokes eagerness, hopeful anticipation and enthusiasm. Before doing so it is essential for you to grasp firmly the main fact about the existing political set-up. In particular you should realise how the membership of the House of Commons is made up at the moment. The Tories control a minimum of 400 votes out of 615, on most occasions many more.

You will see from this that the Tories are in possession of supreme power. What they want they can get. If they really want to carry out a great reform there is nothing to stop them. On the contrary, the minority Parties in the House are committed to ambitious programmes of social reconstruction and would help rather than hinder any step forward the Tories would like to make. Nor can they claim there is any doubt about what the overwhelming majority of the people desire. All the evidence goes to show that public opinion has swung Leftwards since the last General Election, and is not only willing but anxious for fundamental social changes. Here then is the supreme test for the Tories. It is not necessary to speculate about future possibilities beyond the next election. All the elements for forward action are present in the immediate political situation. That is, all except one—the sincerity of the Tories for social reform.

In these circumstances the problem for the Tories is how to hold back any great social advance until the General Election. They can then indulge in another spate of fulsome promises, win another period of power, relying on a short public memory and the distraction of other issues to evade the consequences of yet another betrayal.



Nevertheless, something must be done in the present to give an appearance of concern for the New World they talk about so much in their public speeches. To suit their purpose it must be something which looks like enlightened activity and yet postpones action. They hit upon it in the device of the White Paper. This suits their purpose admirably. The various stages of a White Paper have now become formalised. The first stage is the existence of a general demand for a reform. This stage lies outside the province of the Tories. They have nothing to do with it. They have never been known to initiate the demand for a reform. It comes upon them from the activities of other people, usually from the propaganda of the parties of the Left. It is the practice of the Tories to ignore it for as long as they can, in the hope it will die from political malnutrition. If, however, it gives proof of vitality and begins to accumulate political force and win public attention the second stage occurs. A question is asked the responsible Minister in the House of Commons. At first he side-steps the question, and so gains more time. The questioners, however, persist, and after some adroit Parliamentary manœuvring a Debate is promised. Then comes the third stage. The Debate is held and discloses strong and growing support for the reform. The Government is pressed to bring in a Bill making the reform law. This is the moment of danger for the Tories, for it contains a threat of action. At all costs they must avoid having to vote against the reform in the Division Lobby, for that would expose their real views and pile up a bad record for them at the election. They express great interest in and sympathy for the reform. The issues, however, they invariably add, are complicated, and when the reform is made it should rest on the most secure foundations. The best course to pursue, therefore, is for all the implications to be thoroughly examined by experts by means of a public inquiry, before whom all who have anything to contribute would have a chance of having their views considered. This plea is usually accompanied by a veiled threat against the reformers for wishing to break up the national unity in wartime. The advocates of the reform then go into a huddle and discuss the situation anxiously. The more cautious of them advise the acceptance of the Inquiry as the only means of keeping the issue alive. Otherwise it might be rejected out of hand and the whole process have to be gone through again. Their advice prevails and the Commission of Inquiry is appointed after more months of delay.



Then comes the fourth stage. The Commission makes its investigation. Interested parties appear before it and give their evidence. From time to time references to its work appears in the newspapers. All the witnesses are heard, the evidence collected, and the Commissioners go into private session to consider their findings. Questions are asked in Parliament: "When is the Report to be published?" The Government chides the questioners. The Commissioners must not be hurried. They must be given time to reach considered conclusions. After a while the rumour percolates through to M.P.s that the Report has been in the hands of the Government for some time. Again questions in Parliament. When is the Report to be printed and published for the public? Reluctantly a date is promised and eventually the Report appears. Now comes the fifth stage. When is the Report to be debated? What is the Government going to do about its recommendations? Again delay. At last through the "usual channels" arrangements are made for a Debate. In the course of it the Government is sharply cross-examined. Do they accept the conclusions of the Commission? When do they propose to bring in a Bill to give effect to them? Once more the Tories are in danger of having to act. The prospect of the reform being made law now appears imminent. Now comes the sixth stage in the saga. It is in this stage the Tories produce their new stalling technique, the White Paper. The Government spokesman is put up to explain the position of the Government. The critics must be reasonable, he says. After all, the Commission had many months in which to prepare their findings. The Government is also entitled to have time in which to consider the recommendations of the Commission. In a short time he is sure the Government will be in a position to announce its intentions. There the position stands for months until some unwearied Back Bencher picks it up again and asks, when the intentions of the Government are to be made known to the House? When does the Government propose to bring in a Bill? The Minister suavely replies: "The Government thinks it will be a good plan to allow the House of Commons itself to discuss the matter, so that the Government is put in possession of the general views of Members on the main principles of the proposed reform. In the light of the discussion the Government will then be in a better position to put its own conclusions in a definite form, and so facilitate the final stages of the Bill. With this end in view a White Paper is being prepared which will indicate the general attitude of the Govern-



it stands the contributory Old Age Pension would go up (starting about two years from now) from 10s. to 14s., or for man and wife from 20s. to 25s.; and then every year for the next twenty years it would increase by a little every year until in 1965 every insured man arriving at pension age would have an insurance pension of 24s. a week and every man and wife 40s. a week.

"That's the proposed insurance pension, given and no questions asked as to whether you're working or how much you have coming in; but in the twenty years while that's coming into full strength there's to be a supplementary pension, paid to those needing it, a means test supplement, bringing the pension up to the 40s. level for man and wife or to 24s. for the man or woman alone.

"Wherever you go it's plain to hear that the little shopkeepers and all those other people who've worked on their own account are really thrilled that there's a prospect at last of their coming in full strength into the State Insurance schemes.

"'Is it really true,' I've been asked, 'that we're in?' Yes, it's true that you are there in the proposals. Again, no one knows what changes will be made as the Report is hammered out on the anvil of Parliament into an Act; but so far as the Report is concerned, there you are in your due place in the scheme. 'Employers, traders and independent workers of all kinds'—those are the words of the Report. You'll have a book and in it you'll put the stamp representing your contribution, and you'll come in for the whole range of benefits just like everyone else.

"Men in uniform seem to be just as interested as the rest; but you don't go far before hearing some man (or woman) in uniform just wondering whether there's any danger of the one who's still in the Forces after the scheme starts, getting demobbed later and finding himself an outsider. On that I'd personally lay the heaviest odds I'd ever lay. Whatever benefits are provided for the civilian under the Beveridge Plan as it comes on to the Statute Book—be absolutely certain that the man in the Forces will step out of the Forces into benefits not less than those for which the civilian has been paying his qualifying contributions. Whatever final shape the Social Security Act takes, the man who leaves the Forces will be in at least as good a position under it as any civilian. I assert that because I know that nothing other than that would conceivably be suggested or accepted.

"One man was a bit bothered by the proposal that life insurance should be part of the scheme. He was one who'd paid a



good deal on weekly insurance policies and he hoped all that wouldn't go into a national pool out of which everybody would have the same death benefits—whether they'd paid in the past or not. I told him he could be sure that his personal insurances would stand to his credit, and go on so long as he cared to keep them up, over and above the suggested funeral and other benefits under the scheme.

“It's housewives, I find, who have most difficulty in grasping that part of the proposals which relate to them. We've always taken it so much as a matter of course that a housewife, not being a wage-earner in her own right, had no title to come under any social security scheme whatsoever, that most women cannot at once get the hang of it. But there they are, in their true and honourable place in the Beveridge Plan; to be insured persons in their own right; and not only so, but drawing State allowances in respect of their dependent children.

“A great document, this. It opens out the prospect of a world free from fear and want. Duties to the State will go with benefits from the State, and that, too, is as it should be.

“That's all. Look after yourselves. All the best to all of you, wherever you may be and whatever job you may be on.”

That broadcast set the tone for the publicity which followed. The *Daily Herald* reported: “The Report has been broadcast throughout Europe in 22 languages by the British Broadcasting Corporation. Obviously the Government would not so widely and proudly publicise a scheme which it intended to pigeonhole or to whittle away to vanishing point. *Upon these omens we base high hopes of legislative action.*” Sir Walter Citrine, the Secretary of the Trades Union Congress, declared: “It is evidence of the public conscience recognising at long last that which the Labour Party has stood for.” The supreme authority of the Labour Movement, the National Council of Labour, passed a resolution asking the Government for swift action to operate the general principles of the Beveridge Report. The Liberals issued a statement giving “immediate and unqualified approval” to the “guiding principles of the Beveridge Plan.” Thus two out of the Three Parties forming the National Coalition Government favoured the immediate adoption of the Plan. The Tory Party remained silent.

In the meantime the Report itself had become a best seller. Seventy thousand copies were sold in one day. There could be no mistaking the attitude of the people. Churchmen hastened to bless the Plan. The Bishop of Exeter said: “I welcome the Plan



Members in particular were getting ready to reconsider their position and move an amendment, calling for the immediate adoption of the Report.

The following day Sir Kingsley Wood, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, took up the defence of the Government. Said Sir Kingsley :—

“I want to tell the House what the Government have in mind concerning the exact proposals of the Report, and I would like, if I can, to carry Hon. Members with me in saying that the Government are doing nothing to retard these proposals, but are doing everything that can be reasonably done at the present time to expedite them. What, in fact, do we say shall be done in regard to these exact proposals? We say that immediately after this Debate is concluded, so far as concerns the main matters with which the Lord President indicated that the Government are in agreement, the next and most immediate steps shall be taken concerning them. I do not think that what the Lord President said in his speech was sufficiently appreciated by the House. He said that the Government were favourable to the three main assumptions of the Report and intended to take the necessary steps concerning them.”

Ambiguous and contradictory though this statement was, it did seem to promise action. However, unfortunately for himself but fortunately for clarity, he went on to say: “I have indicated the various steps which may have to be taken. When that has been done—in some cases negotiations may be necessary, in others not—but when they have been carried into effect the next step the Government will take will be to prepare the necessary legislation.” Now this looked like action at last, and everybody sat up and took notice. But the next sentence dashed their hopes once more. “When that has been accomplished,” he added, “the Government definitely reserve the right to look at the financial situation of the country and then come to their conclusions.” The promise was therefore given in one sentence and taken back in the other. At this point I interrupted the Chancellor on a point of clarification: “I think the House should recognise that the fate of the Government and national unity may depend on what he is saying now. Certain specific promises were made yesterday by the Lord President of the Council. Whatever the Home Secretary may say on the Sitting Day is obviously subject to what the Chancellor of the Exchequer is saying now, and that is that whatever concrete proposals are adumbrated now are subject to the over-riding qualification that the Govern-



ment do not commit themselves to any one of them until they have seen their comprehensive financial purport in the circumstances of that time. In other words, none of the concrete things is promised." The fat was back in the fire again and the atmosphere of the House sizzled.

The Tories were worried. Their usual technique was not working out according to plan. Sympathy and support, even enthusiasm, but no action was what they wanted; the appearance of action without the reality.

A number of them rushed in to try to save the situation. Sir Austen Hudson contributed:—

"I like to think that this scheme is simply a step forward in the great improvements which have been made in the condition of the people over the last hundred years or so. . . . Gnawing anxiety as to the future is one of the most soul-destroying things man can suffer from. You will never get the best out of men or women if they have this feeling of anxiety for themselves, their wives and their families. The object of this Report is to do away with that anxiety by means of a comprehensive scheme of insurance against all the normal hazards of life, and it is for that reason that we, almost universally in this House, give approval to the Report."

Major Furness delivered himself in the same vein:—

"I would say quite frankly, as one who is a very strong supporter of the Beveridge proposals, that I share in some measure the dissatisfaction of Honourable Members that the whole Report has not been immediately adopted. . . . This Report is not only a great opportunity. It is a tremendous challenge to us. I hope that we shall have the commonsense and the vigour to press it forward and see that it is put into effect."

But his vote did not follow his speech.

That ardent young Tory Reformer, the Hon. Quintin Hogg, climbed to still higher moral altitudes:—

"I am one of those," he informed the House, "who have come to the conclusion that the question of whether or not we recover after the war depends in the main not so much on economic as upon moral decisions and upon our ability to continue the community spirit, new in time of peace but not unfamiliar on the battlefield or in time of war. . . . If we are to go to the people of this country and say, 'You have to look forward to a long period of self-sacrifice and restriction,' we can do so only if we offer at the same time a COMPLETE MEASURE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE TO GUARANTEE THAT WE SHALL ALL



SUFFER ALIKE. . . . It is because, to my mind, the Beveridge scheme offers the means whereby that can be achieved, and not because it puts forward any particular rate of benefit for any particular class or beneficiary, that I feel it is deserving of warmer support than the Government have in fact given it."

Characteristically, when it came to the Vote, Mr. Hogg voted with the Government. That was the point of action.

In the meantime the Parliamentary Labour Party held their third meeting on the question. Dissatisfaction with the position had now grown acute. Despite efforts made to persuade them to defer their decision until they heard Herbert Morrison's winding up for the Government on the third day they decided to move an amendment in the following terms:—

"This House expresses its dissatisfaction with the now declared policy of His Majesty's Government towards the Report of Sir William Beveridge on Social Insurance and Allied Services, and urges the reconsideration of that policy with a view to the early implementation of the plan."

The Debate which then occurred was remarkable for a speech from Mr. Willink, who is now Minister of Health. He carried the Tory technique to new heights—or depths. It depends on whether you are a victim or a practitioner. He was dissatisfied with the Report. It wasn't good enough for him. In answer to an interruption he said: "No, Sir, I am for improving the Beveridge Report; and I am entitled, in my respectful submission, to ask these questions, as the Amendment calls for the early implementation of the report. There are many features of the report which I do not wish to see implemented, though there are more which I do desire." He also voted with the Government.

When Herbert Morrison wound up for the Government his task was already hopeless. His was not so much a speech for a system of Social Insurance as an attempt to keep Labour in the Government. From that point of view it was a success. But it did not persuade the Parliamentary Labour Party to withdraw the Amendment. The following is the Division:—

AYES	
Acland-Troyte, Lt.-Col. G. J.	Anderson, Rt. Hon. Sir J. (Scottish Univ.)
Adams, Major S. V. T. (Leeds, W.)	Aske, Sir R. W.
Adamson, W. M. (Cannock)	Assheton, R.
Agnew, Comdr. P. G.	Astor, Lt.-Col. Hon. J. J. (Dover)
Albery, Sir Irving	Astor, Hon. W. W. (Fulham, E.)
Alexander, Rt. Hon. A. V. (H'lsbr.)	Attlee, Rt. Hon. C. R.
Alexander, Bg.-Gn. Sir W. (G'g'w C.)	Baillie, Sir A. W. M.
Allen, Lt.-Col. Sir W. J. (Armagh)	Balfour, Capt. Rt. Hon. H. H.
Amery, Rt. Hon. L. C. M. S.	Baxter, A. Berverley



Beamish, Rear-Adml. T. P.  
 Beattie, F. (Cathcart)  
 Beauchamp, Sir B. C.  
 Beaumont, Maj. Hn. R. E. B. (P'ts'h)  
 Beechman, N. A.  
 Beit, Sir A. L.  
 Bennett, Sir E. N. (Cardiff Central)  
 Bennett, Sir P. F. B. (Edgbaston)  
 Bernays, R. H.  
 Bevin, Rt. Hon. E.  
 Bird, Sir R. B.  
 Blair, Sir R.  
 Boles, Lt.-Col. D. C.  
 Boothby, Flt.-Lt. R. J. G.  
 Bossom, A. C.  
 Boulton, W. W.  
 Bower, Norman (Harrow)  
 Bower, Comdr. R. T (Cleveland)  
 Boyce, H. Leslie  
 Bracken, Rt. Hon. B.  
 Braithwaite, Major A. N. (Buckrose)  
 Brass, Capt. Sir W.  
 Briscoe, Capt. R. G.  
 Broadbridge, Sir G. T.  
 Brocklebank, Sir C. E. R.  
 Brooke, H. (Lewisham)  
 Brown, Rt. Hon. E. (Leith)  
 Brown, Brig.-Gen. H. C. (Newbury)  
 Bull, B. B.  
 Bullock, Capt. M.  
 Burghley, Lord  
 Burgin, Rt. Hon. E. L.  
 Burton, Col. H. W.  
 Butcher, Lieut. H. W.  
 Butler, Rt. Hon. R. A.  
 Cadogan, Major Sir E.  
 Caine, G. R. Hall  
 Campbell, Sir E. T. (Bromley)  
 Campbell, J. D. (Antrim)  
 Cary, R. A.  
 Castlereagh, Viscount  
 Cazalet, Col. V. A.  
 Challen, Flight-Lieut. C.  
 Channon, H.  
 Chapman, A. (Rutherglen)  
 Chapman, Sir S. (Edinburgh, S.)  
 Christie, J. A.  
 Clarry, Sir Reginald  
 Cobb, Capt. E. C.  
 Colegate, W. A.  
 Colman, N. C. D.  
 Conant, Major R. J. E.  
 Cooke, J. D. (Hammersmith, S.)  
 Cooper, Rt. Hon. A. Duff  
 Courthope, Col. Rt. Hon. Sir G. L.  
 Craven-Ellis, W.  
 Cripps, Rt. Hon. Sir Stafford  
 Crooke, Sir J. Smedley  
 Crookshank, Capt. Rt. Hon. H. F. C.  
 Crowder, Capt. J. F. E.  
 Culverwell, C. T.

Dalton, Rt. Hon. H.  
 Davidson, Viscountess (H'm'l H'mstd)  
 Davison, Sir W. H.  
 De Chair, Capt. S. S.  
 De la Bère, R.  
 Denman, Hon. R. D.  
 Denville, Alfred  
 Dodd, J. S.  
 Doland, G. F.  
 Donner, Squadron-Leader P. W.  
 Dower, Lt.-Col. A. V. G.  
 Drewe, C.  
 Duckworth, Arthur (Shrewsbury)  
 Luckworth, W. R. (Moss Side)  
 Dugdale, Major T. L. (Richmond)  
 Duggan, H. J.  
 Duncan, Capt. J. A. L. (Kensington N.)  
 Fde, J. C.  
 Eden, Rt. Hon. A.  
 Edmondson, Major Sir J.  
 Ellis, Sir G.  
 Elliston, Captain G. S.  
 Emery, J. F.  
 Ennott, G. E. G. C.  
 Emrys-Evans, P. V.  
 Entwistle, Sir C. F.  
 Errington, Squadron-Leader E.  
 Erskine-Hill, A. G.  
 Etherton, Ralph  
 Evans, Col. A. (Cardiff, S.)  
 Everard, Sir W. Lindsay  
 Fermoy, Lord  
 Fildes, Sir H.  
 Findlay, Sir E.  
 Foot, D. M.  
 Fox, Flight-Lieut. Sir G. W. G.  
 Fraser, Capt. Sir Ian (Lonsdale)  
 Fremantle, Sir F. E.  
 Furness, Major S. N.  
 Fyfe, Major Sir D. P. M.  
 Galbraith, Comdr. T. D.  
 Gammans, Capt. L. D.  
 Garro Jones, G. M.  
 Gates, Major E. E.  
 George, Maj. Rt. Hon. G. Lloyd (Pembroke)  
 Gibson, Sir C. G.  
 Gledhill, G.  
 Gluckstein, Major L. H.  
 Glyn, Sir R. G. C.  
 Goldie, N. B.  
 Gower, Sir R. V.  
 Graham, Captain A. C. (Wirral)  
 Greene, W. P. C. (Worcester)  
 Gretton, Col. Rt. Hon. J.  
 Gridley, Sir A. B.  
 Grigg, Sir E. W. M. (Altrincham)  
 Grigg, Rt. Hon. Sir P. J. (Cardiff, E)  
 Grimston, R. V.  
 Gritten, W. G. Howard



Groves, T. E.  
 Guest, Lt.-Col. H. (Drake)  
 Gunston, Major Sir D. W.  
 Hacking, Rt. Hon. Sir D. H.  
 Hall, Rt. Hon. G. H. (Aberdare)  
 Hannon, Sir P. J. H.  
 Headlam, Lt.-Col. Sir C. M.  
 Heilgers, Major F. F. A.  
 Hely-Hutchinson, M. R.  
 Henderson, A. (Kingswinford)  
 Henderson, J. J. Craik (Leeds, N.E.)  
 Hewlett, T. H.  
 Hicks, E. G.  
 Higgs, W. F.  
 Hinchingsbrooke, Viscount  
 Hogg, Hon. Q. McG.  
 Holdsworth, H.  
 Holmes, J. S.  
 Hore-Belisha, Rt. Hon. L.  
 Horsbrugh, Florence  
 Howitt, Dr. A. B.  
 Hudson, Sir A. (Hackney, N.)  
 Hudson, Rt. Hon. R. S. (Southport)  
 Hulbert, Wing-Commander N. J.  
 Hume, Sir G. H.  
 Hurd, Sir P. A.  
 Hutchinson, G. C. (Ilford)  
 Hutchison, Lt.-Com. G. I. C.  
 (Edinburgh)  
 James, Wing-Comdr. A. W. H.  
 Jarvis, Sir J. J.  
 Jennings, R.  
 Jewson, P. W.  
 Johnston, Rt. Hon. T. (Stirling and  
 Clackmannan)  
 Johnstone, H. (Middlesbrough, W.)  
 Jones, Sir G. W. H. (S'ke Newington)  
 Jowitt, Rt. Hon. Sir W. A.  
 Joynson-Hicks, Lt.-Comdr. Hn. L. W.  
 Keir, Mrs. Cazalet  
 Kerr, H. W. (Oldham)  
 Kerr, Sir John Graham (Scottish U's)  
 Kimball, Major L.  
 King-Hall, Commander W. S. R.  
 Knox, Major-General Sir A. W. F.  
 Lakin, C. H. A.  
 Lamb, Sir J. Q.  
 Law, Rt. Hon. R. K.  
 Leach, W.  
 Lees-Jones, J.  
 Leigh, Sir J.  
 Leighton, Major B. E. P.  
 Levy, T.  
 Lewis, O.  
 Liddall, W. S.  
 Linstead, H. N.  
 Little, Sir E. Graham (Lond. Univ.)  
 Lloyd, C. E. (Dudley)  
 Lloyd, Major E. G. R. (Renfrew, E.)  
 Loftus, P. C.  
 Lucas, Major Sir J. M.  
 Lyle, Sir C. E. Leonard  
 Lyons, Major A. M.  
 Lyttelton, Rt. Hon. Oliver  
 Mabane, W.  
 MacAndrew, Colonel Sir C. G.  
 McCallum, Major D.  
 McCorquodale, Malcolm S.  
 Macdonald, Captain Peter (I. of W.)  
 McEwen, Capt. J. H. F.  
 Maclay, Hon. J. P. (Paisley)  
 Macnamara, Lt.-Col. J. R. J.  
 Magnay, T.  
 Maitland, Sir A.  
 Makins, Brig.-Gen. Sir E.  
 Mander, G. le M.  
 Markham, Major S. F.  
 Marlowe, Lt.-Col. A.  
 Mayhew, Lt.-Col. J.  
 Medicott, Colonel Frank  
 Mellor, Sir J. S. P.  
 Mills, Colonel J. D. (New Forest)  
 Mitchell, Colonel H. P.  
 Mitcheson, Sir G. G.  
 Molson, A. H. E.  
 Moore, Lieut.-Col. Sir T. C. R.  
 Morgan, R. H. (Stourbridge)  
 Morris-Jones, Sir Henry  
 Morrison, G. A. (Scottish Univ.)  
 Morrison, Rt. Hon. H. (Hackney, S.)  
 Morrison, Major J. G. (Salisbury)  
 Morrison, Rt. Hon. W. S. (Cirencester)  
 Mott-Radclyffe, Capt. C. E.  
 Neven-Spence, Major B. H. H.  
 Nicholson, Captain G. (Farnham)  
 Nicolson, Hon. H. G. (Leicester, W.)  
 Noel-Baker, P. J.  
 Nunn, W.  
 O'Neill, Rt. Hon. Sir H.  
 Orr-Ewing, I. L.  
 Paling, W.  
 Palmer, G. E. H.  
 Peake, Rt. Hon. O.  
 Peat, C. U.  
 Perkins, W. R. D.  
 Peters, Dr. S. J.  
 Petherick, Major M.  
 Peto, Major B. A. J.  
 Pickthorn, K. W. M.  
 Pilkington, Captain R. A.  
 Ponsonby, Col. C. E.  
 Pownall, Lt.-Col. Sir Assheton  
 Procter, Major H. A.  
 Purbrick, R.  
 Pym, L. R.  
 Radford, E. A.  
 Raikes, Flight-Lieut. H. V. A. M.  
 Rankin, Sir R.  
 Reed, Sir H. S. (Aylesbury)  
 Reid, W. Allan (Derby)  
 Rickards, G. W.  
 Robertson, D. (Streatham)



Robinson, J. R. (Blackpool)  
 Rothschild, J. A. E.  
 Rowlands, G.  
 Royds, Admiral Sir P. M. R.  
 Russell, Sir A. (Tynemouth)  
 Salt, E. W.  
 Sanderson, Sir F. B.  
 Sandys, E. D.  
 Schuster, Sir G. E.  
 Scott, Donald (Wansbeck)  
 Scott, Lord William (Roxburgh and  
     Selkirk)  
 Selley, H. R.  
 Shaw, Major P. S. (Wavertree)  
 Shaw, Capt. W. T. (Forfar)  
 Simmonds, O. E.  
 Sinclair, Rt. Hon. Sir A.  
 Smith, Ben (Rotherhithe)  
 Smith, Bracewell (Dulwich)  
 Smith, E. P. (Ashford)  
 Smith, T. (Normanton)  
 Smithers, Sir W.  
 Snadden, W. McN.  
 Somervell, Rt. Hon. Sir D. B.  
 Spearman, A. C. M.  
 Stanley, Col. Rt. Hon. Oliver  
 Stewart, J. Henderson (Fife, E.)  
 Storey, S.  
 Strauss, H. G. (Norwich)  
 Strickland, Capt. W. F.  
 Stuart, Lord C. Crichton (Northwich)  
 Studholme, Captain H. G.  
 Sueter, Rear-Adml. Sir M. F.  
 Summers, G. S.  
 Sutcliffe, H.  
 Sykes, Maj.-Gen. Rt. Hon. Sir F. H.  
 Tasker, Sir R. I.  
 Taylor, Major C. S. (Eastbourne)  
 Taylor, Vice-Adm. E. A. (P'd'ton, S.)  
 Thomas, J. P. L. (Hereford)  
 Thomas, Dr. W. S. Russell (S'mpton)  
 Thomson, Sir J. D. W.  
 Thornton-Kemsley, Major C. N.  
 Thurtle, E.  
 Touche, G. C.  
 Tree, A. R. L. F.  
 Tufnell, Lieut.-Comdr. R. L.  
 Wakefield, W. W.  
 Walker-Smith, Sir J.  
 Ward, Col. Sir A. L. (Hull)  
 Ward, Irene M. B. (Wallsend)  
 Wardlaw-Milne, Sir J. S.  
 Waterhouse, Capt. C.  
 Watt, F. C. (Edinburgh Central)  
 Watt, Lt.-Col. G. S. H. (Richmond)  
 Webbe, Sir W. Harold  
 Wedderburn, H. J. S.  
 Wells, Sir R. Richard  
 Weston, W. Garfield  
 Westwood, J.  
 White, Sir Dymoke (Fareham)

White, H. Graham (Birkenhead, E.)  
 Wickham, Lt.-Col. E. T. R.  
 Williams, C. (Torquay)  
 Williams, Sir H. G. (Croydon, S.)  
 Williams, Rt. Hon. T. (Don Valley)  
 Willink, H. U.  
 Windsor-Clive, Lt.-Col. G.  
 Winterton, Rt. Hon. Earl  
 Wise, Major A. R.  
 Womersley, Rt. Hon. Sir W.  
 Wood, Rt. Hon. Sir K. (W'lwich, W.)  
 Woolley, W. E.  
 Wootton-Davies, J. H.  
 Wragg, H.  
 Wright, Group Capt. J. (Erdington)  
 York, Major C.  
 Young, A. S. L. (Partick)  
 Tellers for the Ayes:—  
     Mr. James Stuart and  
     Mr. Whiteley

#### NOES

Acland, Sir R. T. D.  
 Ammon, C. G.  
 Anderson, F. (Whitehaven)  
 Barnes, A. J.  
 Barr, J.  
 Barstow, P. G.  
 Bartlett, C. V. O.  
 Bellenger, F. J.  
 Bevan, A.  
 Bowles, F. G.  
 Broad, F. A.  
 Brooks, T. J. (Rothwell)  
 Brown, T. J. (Ince)  
 Brown, W. J. (Rugby)  
 Buchanan, G.  
 Burke, W. A.  
 Cape, T.  
 Chater, D.  
 Cluse, W. S.  
 Cocks, F. S.  
 Collindridge, F.  
 Cove, W. G.  
 Davidson, J. J. (Maryhill)  
 Davies, Clement (Montgomery)  
 Davies, R. J. (Westhoughton)  
 Davies, S. O. (Merthyr)  
 Dobbie, W.  
 Driberg, T. E. N.  
 Dugdale, John (W. Bromwich)  
 Dunn, E.  
 Edwards, A. (Middlesbrough, E.)  
 Edwards, Rt. Hon. Sir C. (Bedwellty)  
 Edwards, Walter J. (Whitechapel)  
 Evans, D. O. (Cardigan)  
 Foster, W.  
 Frankel, D.  
 Gallacher, W.  
 George, Rt. Hon. D. Lloyd (Carn'v'n)  
 George, Megan Lloyd (Anglesey)



Granville, E. L.  
 Green, W. H. (Deptford)  
 Greenwood, Rt. Hon. A.  
 Grenfell, D. R.  
 Grey, Captain G. C.  
 Griffiths, G. A. (Hemsworth)  
 Griffiths, J. (Llanelly)  
 Gruffydd, W. J.  
 Guest, Dr. L. Haden (Islington, N.)  
 Guy, W. H.  
 Hall, W. G. (Colne Valley)  
 Hardie, Agnes  
 Harris, Rt. Hon. Sir P. A.  
 Harvey, T. E.  
 Hayday, A.  
 Henderson, J. (Ardwick)  
 Henderson, T. (Tradeston)  
 Hollins, A. (Hanley)  
 Hollins, J. H. (Silvertown)  
 Horabin, T. L.  
 Hughes, R. M.  
 Kendall, W. D.  
 Key, C. W.  
 Kirkby, B. V.  
 Lawson, J. J.  
 Leonard, W.  
 Leslie, J. R.  
 Lipson, D. L.  
 McEntee, V. La T.  
 McGhee, H. G.  
 McGovern, J.  
 Mack, J. D.  
 MacLaren, A.  
 Maclean, N. (Govan)  
 MacMillan, M. (Western Isles)  
 McNeil, H.  
 Mainwaring, W. H.  
 Martin, J. H.  
 Maxton, J.  
 Messer, F.  
 Morgan, Dr. H. B. W. (Rochdale)  
 Morrison, R. C. (Tottenham, N.)

Mort, D. L.  
 Murray, J. D. (Spennymoor)  
 Naylor, T. E.  
 Oldfield, W. H.  
 Oliver, G. H.  
 Parker, J.  
 Pearson, A.  
 Pethick-Lawrence, Rt. Hon. F. W.  
 Poole, Captain C. C.  
 Price, M. P.  
 Pritt, D. N.  
 Reakes, G. L. (Wallasey)  
 Reid, Capt. A. Cunningham (St. M.)  
 Roberts, W.  
 Salter, Dr. A. (Bermondsey, W.)  
 Sexton, T. M.  
 Shinwell, E.  
 Silkin, L.  
 Silverman, S. S.  
 Sloan, A.  
 Smith, E. (Stoke)  
 Sorensen, R. W.  
 Stephen, C.  
 Stewart, W. Joseph (Houghton-le-Spring)  
 Stokes, R. R.  
 Strauss, G. R. (Lambeth, N.)  
 Summerskill, Dr. Edith  
 Taylor, H. B. (Mansfield)  
 Thomas, I. (Keighley)  
 Thorncroft, H. (Clayton)  
 Tinker, J. J.  
 Viant, S. P.  
 Walkden, E. (Doncaster)  
 Watson, W. McL.  
 Welsh, J. C.  
 Williams, E. J. (Ogmore)  
 Windsor, W.  
 Woodburn, A.  
 Tellers for the Noes:—  
 Mr. Charleton and  
 Mr. R. J. Taylor.

After the figures were announced Mr. James Maxton asked: "In view of this extraordinary Division, having regard to the fact that a very large number of the Government's supporters (Labour supporters) have voted against them in the Lobby, has the Leader of the House or the Deputy Prime Minister any statement to make?" The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Eden): "No, Sir; the Government has no statement to make. They are going to get on with their job."

What was this taken to mean? The war? But there was no question of that at issue. It was taken to mean that the Government was going to get on with the job of carrying out the promises they had made in the course of the Debate. Speaking for the Government, Herbert Morrison had said: "I cannot



follow my Hon. friends from whom naturally I thoroughly dislike to differ, having got it quite sincerely into their heads that the Government are doing what in technical language is called a double-cross. The Government have no wish to do a double-cross at all. We are in earnest about this."

Action, it appeared, was promised even if it was not to proceed entirely on the lines of the Report. So many people thought. Sir William Beveridge himself was deceived. Naturally disappointed that his Plan was not wholly adopted, yet pleased by the promises of the speedy acceptance of most of it, he wrote in his "Pillar of Security":—

"Within three months of the presentation of my Report on Social Insurance and the Allied Services, the Government has accepted provisionally a large number of important proposals contained in it, including the introduction of children's allowances, the establishment of a comprehensive medical service, abolition of the Approved Society system, introduction of funeral benefit, and the making of insurance comprehensive. There can be few parallels for such speed of action in peacetime, and the Government may well feel, and some of its Members, no doubt, do feel that the critics who express dissatisfaction with this achievement are unreasonable. The explanation of the dissatisfaction is that these are days not of peace but of war. The pace of government that suits peace does not suit war."

That was three months after the presentation of the Report. Another three months passed. Nothing could better illustrate the deflated level of public expectation and the progress backwards that the Tories were making than the sharp exchange that took place at this time between the author of the Report and Mr. Osbert Peake, Home Office Under Secretary. On July 28th, 1943, speaking in Edinburgh, Sir William Beveridge declared that the criticism of his social security plan by the Home Office Under-Secretary was "an insult to the intelligence of our people." "I have been accused," he continued, "by a Minister of the Crown of setting my plans in too florid and extravagant a frame and of raising hopes of the abolition of want which cannot be fulfilled." (Mr. Osbert Peake made this head-on attack of the Beveridge Report in an address to young Oxford Conservatives.)

"Mine is first and foremost a plan for distributing incomes so as to put first things first—money for bread for all at all times, before there is money for cake for anybody. My report is a plan, not a pipe-dream. It is figures, not fantasy. All that it will



cost the taxpayer to start my plan is the equivalent of one penny on beer and sixpence in income tax. That is not an addition to present taxes. It means simply that present taxes would to that extent be lowered less when war spending stops. That's a small price for social security. I am not a defeatist like many of those who talk loudly about adventure and enterprise. . . . I see no reason for anticipating poverty for the British people after the war, because I believe in them. . . . The sinister point about this argument of Mr. Peake is that the assertion that a few will spend money unwisely may be used as an excuse for depriving all of the minimum needed for subsistence and for making no attempt at all to abolish want. . . . There is no reason for delay if you really want the Plan. . . . Make the getting of it soon, not late, the touchstone of politics and politicians. If you do not get easily this which all accept in principle, you will never get anything. . . . Keep your eyes skinned for those who talk security but mean privilege."

More than a year after this fighting speech by Beveridge, nothing has yet been done. What we are going to get, apparently, is not a Bill embodying the promises of the Government, but merely another White Paper followed by another Debate, followed by what?

In proportion to the expectation which has been roused by the intense publicity given to the Plan was the feeling of acute disappointment when it was realised that nothing was going to be done after all. Mr. Churchill sensed this, and in his broadcast on Sunday, March 21st, 1943, he tried to soothe the hurt. "You must rank me and my colleagues," he declared, "as strong partisans of national compulsory insurance of all classes from the cradle to the grave."

More words. Sir William Beveridge, in asking why the delay, turned aptly against the Prime Minister one of Mr. Churchill's own speeches during the last war. Mr. Churchill, criticising the Government of that time for hanging fire with war measures which he considered urgent, asked: "Why not do this now? . . . No one is stopping the Government except themselves." Precisely. And that is again the situation. No one is stopping the Government except themselves.

Here, to date, is the Beveridge Report Time Schedule:—

1941

June 10

Arthur Greenwood announces Beveridge Committee.



1942

Nov. 18 Issued to Press.

Dec. 1 Report published.

1943

Feb. 17-19 Report debated by Commons: Anderson, Kingsley Wood, Morrison indicate qualified Government acceptance.

March 2 *Attlee*: Too soon for Government to say when they will make a further statement.

March 18 *Churchill*: Nothing to add.

*Jowitt*: Announces central committee of seven Civil Servants to work on application of Report.

March 30 *Churchill*: Refer to previous statements.

April 15 *Jowitt*: Work actively proceeding.

April 22 *Jowitt*: Must of necessity take a considerable time to bring to completion.

May 4 *Jowitt*: Refer to previous statements.

June 1 *Attlee*: Not in a position to forecast legislation.

June 22 *Jowitt*: Constructive work on the scheme is proceeding expeditiously.

June 24 *Churchill*: Nothing to add: It would be very disastrous if so far-reaching a scheme were to be carried through in an atmosphere which appears to show intolerance to the careful examination of details.

Sept. 6 *Jowitt* (Speech at Bury): Government will soon make an announcement.

It was only with difficulty that Socialists could persuade themselves to back the Beveridge Plan in the first place. There is nothing particularly new or adventurous in it for them. The idea of an all-in social insurance scheme has formed part of their political propaganda for more than a quarter of a century. But, as distinct from Sir William Beveridge, they favoured a non-contributory scheme, not only for the sake of freedom from want, but as a means of assisting in the redistribution of the national income. As we shall see later on in this book, it is now pretty generally admitted that one of the main causes of unemployment is the low purchasing power of the workers. To collect high contributions from them in order to finance insurance will further reduce their ability to buy goods and therefore to keep the wheels of industry turning. But when the Beveridge Report was published Socialists allowed themselves to be persuaded to support it on the ground that it represented an agreed



measure and therefore one with a better prospect of getting quickly passed into law. They were encouraged to believe this by the fanfare of trumpets which welcomed the Report when first it came out. It is obvious now that even this modest proposal is too much for the Tories to swallow. For a time it did look as though even the Tory technique would fail them in their ceaseless struggle to prevent an improvement in the common lot. But once more they prove equal to the occasion. They contrive to drown the wistful hopes of the people for social security in a torrent of words, specious promises and endless delays. When the issue comes up once more—as come up it must—it will be all the more difficult to persuade the people to take a lively interest in it. This is what the Tories reckon on. In those circumstances they will be able to put through a niggardly, piecemeal measure, or merely one more White Paper, confident that no amount of agitation will serve to rouse the people to the high pitch of interest they showed in the winter of 1942 and the spring of 1943. Furthermore, the Tories hope that the military victories on the battlefronts will help the people to forget the defeat they have sustained on the home front. The Tories have seen this war not only as a military threat by the Nazis, but also as a peril to the old ways of life. They fought a successful rearguard action against the Beveridge Report. But there are other dangers even more menacing for them. Let us go on to see what they are and how they are meeting them.

## CHAPTER 4

### JOBS FOR SOME

On March 21st, 1943, the Prime Minister delivered a broadcast on post-war home politics. In considering this speech it is as well to keep in mind what I have already described in the first chapter of this book. Just as at the end of the last war Lloyd George tried to persuade Labour to stay in his Government, so this time too Mr. Churchill seeks to cheat the people of their opportunity of power. Even if he cannot persuade the Labour Party to play his game he hopes to divide it by inducing some of its leaders to remain with him.



In his broadcast, Mr. Churchill, after discussing some aspects of foreign affairs, said :—

“Coming nearer home, we shall have to consider at the same time how the inhabitants of this island are going to get their living at this stage of the world story, and how they are going to maintain and progressively improve their previous standards of life and labour. I am very much attracted to the idea that we should make and proclaim what may be called a Four Years plan. Four years seems to me to be the right length for the period of transition and reconstruction which will follow the downfall of Hitler.

“When this plan has been shaped it will have to be presented to the country, either by a National Government formally representative, as this one is, of the three parties of the State, or by a National Government comprising the best men of all parties who are willing to serve.” Political renegades always start their career of treachery as the “best men of all parties” and end up in the Tory knackery.

Knowing that what happened after the last war was present in the minds of many of his listeners, Mr. Churchill tried to meet it. You would think by his speech that he had been merely a spectator of events then, whereas, you will recollect, he had been one of the principal actors in that squalid story.

“Thus,” he went on to say, “when peace comes suddenly, as it did last time, there were no long carefully prepared plans for the future. That was one of the main reasons why at the end of the last war, after a momentary recovery we fell into a dreadful trough of unemployment. We must not be caught that way again.” (You remember, how in Dundee in 1918 he told his audience that much of the work of preparation for the post-war period had already been done. You recall how his colleague in political deception, Sir Auckland Geddes, told the electors of the plans that had been made?)

Oblivious to the fact that he had already said all this at the end of the last war, Churchill continued :—

“It is therefore necessary to make sure that we have projects for the future employment of the people and the forward movement of our industries carefully foreseen, and, secondly, that private enterprise and State enterprise are both able to play their parts to the utmost. A number of measures are being, and will be, prepared, which will enable the Government to exercise a balancing influence upon development which can be turned on and off as circumstances require.” (Keep that last sentence in



mind, and remember it was said as far back as March, 1943. I shall return to it later.) He went on:—

“There is a broadening field for State ownership and enterprise, especially in relation to monopolies of all kinds. The modern State will increasingly concern itself with the economic wellbeing of the nation, but it is all the more vital to revive at the earliest moment a widespread healthy and vigorous private enterprise without which we shall never be able to provide, in the years when it is needed, the employment for our soldiers, sailors and airmen, to which they are entitled after their duty has been done.”

So much for the promise and the Plan. When did we next hear of them? In May, 1944, just before the Second Front opened in Normandy. They appeared in the form of the White Paper on “Employment Policy.” The whole meaning of the White Paper is contained in that sentence of Churchill’s, used fifteen months before, about Government action being turned on and off as occasion requires. In short, the proposals were kept in cold storage for fifteen months to be released and made known to the House of Commons almost simultaneously with the launching of the Second Front. It is clear the principal concern of the Government was not how to deal with unemployment after the war, but how to persuade us they were and how to influence the psychology of the armed forces. The Government was not in fact planning against unemployment, but against the scepticism they knew existed in the Fighting Services. It was not the state of trade they were dealing with, but the state of mind. If, as is now clear, the policy of the Government on post-war employment had been decided as far back as March, 1943, why was it kept a secret from the House of Commons? For the reason I have already given, and for a second one, almost as important. Because, during the past fifteen months, the Government would have been badgered to say what steps they were taking to put it into effect.

This throws an entirely new light on the Government’s White Paper on employment after the war. It reveals it as a piece of elaborate and cynical deception. There are two other items of evidence to show how it was carefully timed. On June 5th, that is just before D-Day, Lord Woolton, Minister of Reconstruction, made a speech, in which he described the White Paper on Employment Policy as the “Government’s salute to the ex-soldier.” In the particular circumstances his language is specially significant. This is how he put it: “I was glad to be



able to announce that policy, when we are nearing the climax of the war in the West. It is a policy of work for all. It is our salute to the ex-soldier. I hope that the universal approval that has been given to the proposals will have done something to encourage those brave men who are soon to embark upon the greatest military adventure this country has known."

The second bit of evidence showing what was uppermost in the mind of the Government is contained in the beginning of the speech of Ernest Bevin's in the House of Commons in opening the Debate on the White Paper. It is possible Bevin is unaware of the use to which he is being put. He said: "With my Right Hon. friend the Prime Minister, I had an opportunity of visiting one of our ports and seeing the men of the 50th Division, among others, going aboard ship—gallant men, brave men with no complaint. They were going off to face this terrific battle, with great hearts and great courage. The one question they put to me when I went through their ranks was: 'Ernie, when we have done this job for you are we going back to the dole?'" (Hon. Members: "Ernie?") "Yes, it was put to me in that way, because they knew me personally. They were members of my own union, and I think the sense they used the word, Ernie, can be understood. Both the Prime Minister and I answered: 'No, you are not.'" I hope those words will never haunt Ernest Bevin in the years to come. It is an audacious, or an irresponsible, man who would use such language to soldiers going into battle, about a proposal to deal with unemployment to which the Tories had given their approval.

Whatever the merits of the proposal itself it is now clear that it was agreed more than fifteen months ago, it was kept back during precious months during which, if it is of value, definite plans based on it could have been worked out, and it was released to the public for reasons of public psychology, rather than as a sober and thoughtful job of social planning. In its timing, in its inception, and in the carefully prepared publicity accompanying its announcement, the White Paper on Employment, therefore, satisfies the same Tory test we have applied to all the other White Papers. That is to say, its function is to suit the mood of the people rather than to solve the problems with which it is supposed to deal.

And now, what about its merits? Many Socialists have been pleased with the White Paper because it frankly admits that the system of free private enterprise, if left to itself, inevitably produces unemployment. It is difficult to understand why we



should be so delighted with the admission of a fact which is known to every man and woman in the country, most of whom have not had the advantages of the specialised education enjoyed by the advisers of the Government. It does seem rather silly to cheer because at last the Government have caught up with the normal experience of millions of ordinary men and women. If it is evidence of anything it serves to prove the absurdity of the economics taught in our schools and universities. There the students learn, how, by every principle, of logic, the economic system ought to work and correct its own defects by automatic readjustments. The system of private enterprise went on producing unemployment, whilst the schools went on proving it ought not to do so. At last the schools are beginning to catch up with the facts of life. Perhaps it is because a number of students have found their way to the universities who have had experience of unemployment in their own families, and are able to convince their teachers that it is something more than an annoying economic aberration which refuses to fit in with pre-conceived economic theories. The White Paper makes the admission in the usual pompous and obscure language, but it is worth while quoting it so that you will have it by you in case of argument. Here it is :—

“ Assuming a given level of wages and prices, and full mobility of labour, workers will lose or fail to find employment because there is not a sufficiently large expenditure on the goods and services which they might produce. If more money is spent on goods and services, then more money will be paid out as wages and more people will be employed. Thus, the first step in a policy of maintaining general employment must be to prevent total expenditure (analysed in paragraph 43) from falling away. Once it is allowed to do so, a minor decline may rapidly gather momentum and take on the proportions of a major depression. If, for example, there is a decline in the demand for steel for the erection of new buildings, unemployment will first appear among steel workers. The steel workers, in consequence, will have less to spend on food and other consumer goods, so that the demand for consumer goods will fall. This leads to unemployment among the workers in the consumer goods industries who, in turn, find their purchasing power reduced. As a result of this general loss of purchasing power in the community, the demand for new building is still further reduced and the demand for constructional steel falls once again. The original decline in expenditure produces secondary reactions



which themselves aggravate the source of the trouble. This is an over-simplified illustration, but it is sufficient to make it clear that the crucial moment for intervention is at the first onset of the depression. A corrective applied then may arrest the whole decline; once the decline has spread and gathered momentum, interventions on a much greater scale would be required—and at that stage might not be effective."

Put in ordinary words, what that means is that, even when private enterprise is working normally, workers do not get paid enough in wages and salaries to buy and consume all the goods and services they produce. Now to you and me the solution appears to be simple. It is raise wages and salaries to the level where they are high enough to buy back the full value of the products. But then what would become of profits? The Tories are in politics in order to protect the profit maker, and the Tories support the White Paper. You will not, therefore, be surprised to learn that the White Paper, being a Tory production, proposes to continue private enterprise after the war. In other words, it is proposed to keep in being a system which even its own supporters admit must inevitably and automatically produce unemployment. The price of Toryism is unemployment. "Ah, but," you may reply, "what of the promises of the Prime Minister and Ernest Bevin? Surely, they are not asking us to support a proposition so absurd? There must be something else to it." There is, and I propose to explain it to you. This is their idea. First, private enterprise is allowed to operate freely, just as it did before the war, with all the uncertainties, injustices, the very rich and the very poor, strikes, lock-outs, unequal rewards and all the rest of it. There will be some unemployed, of course, because the White Paper does not pretend to cure all unemployment. All it aims at is a "high and stable level of employment." Those are its own words. It is assumed most people will be in work, with a percentage looking for work, and therefore keeping up the competition for jobs which will serve to keep the wage earners in their place. In short, the sort of situation which existed, say, round about 1937. That, I gather, is about the most private enterprise is expected to achieve. If those soldiers who asked Ernest Bevin the question before setting out for Normandy are among the unemployed percentage, so much the worse for them.

In the meantime, and whilst we are enjoying the best that private enterprise can give, a small body of experts, previously appointed by the Government, will be on the look-out watching



for signs of approaching unemployment. They will occupy a sort of economic watch-tower, as it were. They will collect statistics of production, figures of investment and savings, and such-like, so as to discover how near we are to a slump caused by the anarchy and planlessness of private competition.

They will have to keep a keen look out because when a slump occurs it may develop, in the words of the White Paper, with "fearful rapidity." In 1921, for example, unemployment rose from five to fifteen per cent. in four months. When you consider that an increase of only one per cent. involves more than one hundred and fifty thousand workers out of work, affecting with their families more than half a million human beings, you can have some idea of the calamity which can overtake our homes with the onset of a trade depression. As soon as the experts see that coming they give the Government the "office." What does the Government do then? Let the White Paper tell us:—

"63. The procedure which the Government have in mind is as follows. All local authorities will submit annually to the appropriate Department their programme of capital expenditure for the next five years. For the first of those years at least the plans will have been worked out in all details and will be ready for immediate operation; for the later years they will naturally be increasingly tentative and provisional. These programmes will then be assembled by an appropriate co-ordinating body under Ministers and will be adjusted, upward or downward, in the light of the latest information on the prospective employment situation. If this entails a slowing down of programmes, adequate powers, through the withholding of loan sanctions or grants, are ready to hand. If it entails an acceleration, the Government will, by granting loan sanctions or otherwise facilitating finance, bring forward projects which otherwise might have had to wait for a later opportunity."

What does all that amount to? Our old friend Public Works: roads, sewers, afforestation, bridges, etc. At this point you may protest: "Do you mean to tell me that all the Government has in mind is a programme of public works expenditure as a method of dealing with unemployment after the war?" I answer, I do, and it is. Again let the White Paper speak for itself:—

"66. The Government believe that in the past the power of public expenditure, skilfully applied, to check the onset of a depression has been under-estimated. The whole notion of pressing forward quickly with public expenditure when incomes were falling and the outlook was dark has, naturally enough, encoun-



tered strong resistance from persons who are accustomed, with good reason, to conduct their private affairs according to the very opposite principle. Such resistance can, however, be overcome if public opinion is brought to the view that periods of trade recession provide an opportunity to improve the permanent equipment of society by the provision of better housing, public buildings, means of communication, power and water supplies, etc."

There are one or two trivial proposals in addition to that, but there you have the substance of what the Government have in mind.

In order that you may appreciate the full frivolity of what is in store for you if this so-called plan is ever adopted I will describe one of these additional minor schemes. You will remember that the White Paper admits that the chief cause of the slump in the first place arises from the low purchasing power of the people. Consequently they suggest a means of increasing that buying power at the outset of a slump. They propose to do so by reducing insurance contributions during the depression and increasing them during a period of full employment. I will give you the scale contained in the White Paper so that you may see how it might work out:—

Unemployment percentage	Weekly Social Insurance Stamp.					
	Worker		Employer		Joint	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
Less than 5 per cent. ....	5	6	4	6	10	0
Between 5 and 7 per cent. ..	5	0	4	0	9	0
Between 7 and 9 per cent. ..	4	3	3	3	7	6
Between 9 and 11 per cent. ..	3	6	2	6	6	0
More than 11 per cent. ....	3	0	2	0	5	0

4. The scheme would bring about a substantial increase in purchasing power. The effect may be illustrated from the foregoing figures. Should it occur that in a period of difficulty average unemployment changed by four points from 8 per cent. to 12 per cent., nearly 10 million adult male workers would have their incomes increased by 1s. 3d. per week and employers would have their prime costs reduced by 1s. 3d. per week for each adult male in their employ. Assuming comparable changes in the contributions of adult female workers and non-adults, this rise of four points in the unemployment percentage would result in an immediate increase of nearly £1 million a week in the



incomes of the workers, and a corresponding reduction in the costs of their employers."

It is difficult to write patiently about such an inane proposal. If, by a reduction of the contribution, consumption is increased and therefore more people given work, then a corresponding amount of unemployment must have been caused in the first place by the contribution being so high. But such simple reasoning is too much for the pundits responsible for the scheme. If the proposal is ever operated then what becomes of the pledge to prevent unemployment? An unemployment figure of more than eleven per cent. would mean an unemployed army of more than a million and a half. That would be certain to catch some of those soldiers who were sent off to France so happily by the Prime Minister's light-hearted promise.

There is another aspect of it to which I think you should pay attention. Suppose you are one of the lucky ones to remain in work in those conditions. You would have an increase in wages as a result of the reduction in contributions. Your unfortunate comrade, however, would have to live on unemployment benefit. If any change is to be made, don't you think the right thing to do would be to increase the unemployed chap's benefit? After all, he would be even more likely than you to spend his money at once, and on consumption goods. Hasn't that occurred to the architects of the scheme? Of course, it has. But they think an increase in benefit might tempt him not to look for work, and might even lever up wages. "But then," you say, "wouldn't that be all right, for more wages would mean more consumption." There you go again. You haven't yet realised this is a Tory scheme, and it already rejects higher wages as a means of avoiding the slump in the first instance.

Let us look even more closely at the proposals of the White Paper, so that you may see exactly what is in store for you if you are foolish enough to give the Tories another lease of power.

Suppose you are a steel worker, a miner, an engineer or a shipbuilder. You are thrown out of work by a decline in the demand for steel, coal, machinery or ships. They are the jobs you know best and in the performance of them you are skilled. At that point the Government sends its officials to interview you at the employment exchange and informs you there is work available for you, quite possibly in another part of the country, as an unskilled labourer, making what the White Paper describes as "better housing, public buildings, means of communications, power and water supplies, etc." In short, you cease to be a steel



worker, miner, engineer or shipbuilder and become a tramp. For this reason the White Paper places a good deal of emphasis on the necessity for labour being mobile. That is, ready to be made into tramps.

One of the worse consequences of this lunatic scheme is the uncertainty it will introduce into the public sector of employment, that is, the plans prepared by public authorities. They will be expected to keep back their own plans for increasing social amenities whilst Private Enterprise is having its unfettered fling. And then, when the anarchy of profit-making produces its inevitable nemesis in large-scale unemployment, the public authorities will be expected to come to the rescue with their own plans which will have been held back in the meantime. For, don't forget, the White Paper proposes the deliberate holding back of public works until the threat of depression. To quote its own language: ". . . These programmes will then be assembled by an appropriate co-ordinating body under Ministers and will be adjusted upward or downward in the light of the latest information on the prospective employment situation. *If this entails a slowing down of programmes, adequate powers, through the withholding of loans or grants, are ready to hand.*" So, in addition to planlessness, anarchy and absence of steady progress in the sector of privately owned industry, the same crazy conditions will be introduced into the public sector. Instead of more planning, the White Paper decreases even the small amount of planning there is. The only difference between what is now proposed and what existed in the past is that in the future it is to be regarded as a recognised principle that we increase public expenditure on what the White Paper describes as the "permanent equipment of society" when private enterprise is demonstrably failing to maintain a "high and stable level of employment." This the Government calls "thermostatic control of employment." Thermostatic principles may be all very well for mechanical things like motor cars, but it is an entirely different matter when they are practised on the living flesh of men, women and children. When you are being taken to some labour camp to work on a dam, or a power station, or put to dig trenches for gas and water mains, you will be pleased to know that you are a "thermostat" helping to keep the capitalist system in equilibrium.

When you come back from the war your natural expectation is to find a regular job, establish a home and bring up a family in conditions of increasing comfort and security. You will hope



to live most of your life in the same town, become a substantial citizen, and take part in civic affairs. In your private scheme of things you look forward to working in the same industry, making yourself more and more proficient in your job and earning promotion and greater responsibility. That is not the prospect opened up for you by this Tory conception of your life. Remember you are not only a man and a citizen. You are also a potential "thermostat" on tap to adjust the fluctuations of private investment. So that every now and then you may be thrown out of work, and then pounced upon and converted into a labourer, engaged on building the "permanent equipment of society," probably away from your family and friends. You will work at that until this public expenditure has pumped enough oxygen into the system of private investment to start it off again. Then you will go back to your work as a mechanic and continue at that until the machinery of private enterprise breaks down again, and then once more you will be converted into a "thermostat." As the White Paper says, you must be ready to be "mobile." On page 20 it promises to try "... to prevent mobility of labour being impeded by arrangements of a type sometimes made before the war, whereby workers worked part-time and claimed unemployment benefit for the rest of the week."

In all this, however, the Tories themselves begin to smell a danger. You might, in time, condition yourself to become a "thermostat" and lose all human initiative. For after all, a "thermostat" is merely a piece of machinery without ambitions of its own. The Tories are aware of this, so the White Paper utters a warning. In the next paragraph it says:—

"56. It would be a disaster if the intention of the Government to maintain total expenditure were interpreted as exonerating the citizen from the duty of fending for himself and resulted in a weakening of personal enterprise. For if an expansion of total expenditure were applied to cure unemployment of a type due, not to absence of jobs, but to failure of workers to move to places and occupations where they were needed, the policy of the Government would be frustrated and a dangerous rise in prices might follow."

So you see you will be expected to combine the virtues of a piece of docile machinery with the enterprise, initiative and ambitions of a full man. In short, a trooper all the time.

These alternations between being a "thermostat" and a man will occur about every four or five years according to what we



now know of the economic palpitations of private enterprise. They may occur even more frequently as a result of the enormous advancement made in the technique of production. We all know that changes are always taking place in industry. New methods of production, changes in demand for goods, the discovery of new articles of consumption, all these are the natural and inevitable results of living in an industrial age. So we have to adapt ourselves to them, and this sometimes means changing our jobs and even now and then the place where we live. All this we accept as the price of a changing and progressive community. But the disturbances and dislocations proposed for you in the White Paper are not due to those. They are superimposed on them. They are the price of giving "private enterprise a last chance" in the language of Ernest Bevin. Why it should be given another chance he hasn't explained. But we know it is because the Tories insist on it.

This decision to give private enterprise another chance has a further result. As you know, private enterprise broke down on the outbreak of war as usual, and the State had to build factories all over the country. We spent one thousand million pounds on them. They are to be handed over to private ownership. This is what the White Paper says about it: "... factories which are not likely to be required for the manufacture of munitions after the end of the war will be released as early as possible, and those owned by the Government will be leased or sold for civilian use." There is a nice juicy inducement to large-scale corruption for you. The vultures are already hovering around.

That is how the Government proposes to dispose of the factories built by the State during the war. Surplus war goods are a different matter entirely. There is much more anxiety in business circles to get the factories where goods are made than to get the goods themselves. More profits are made that way. In fact, so embarrassed are the Government by the thought of the surplus which will be left on their hands when the war ends that they have published a special White Paper dealing with the problem. This consists mainly of how to "feed" the goods into the distributive system without reducing prices and interfering with the profits of those making the same articles. Take blankets, for instance; a very useful and important commodity, as I think you will agree. A man's friend and solace in a thousand and one vicissitudes and discomforts.

Is it therefore possible to have too many blankets? Apparently it is. Or so the Government think. If the war came to



an end to-morrow we should have millions of blankets left on our hands. Millions too many blankets. It is scarcely conceivable; yet it is so. For five years or more we have been making blankets. Blankets for the soldiers, in billet and bivouac. Blankets for the A.T.S. in hutment and camp. Blankets for the airmen and blankets for the sailors. At no time did anyone think we had too many blankets. On the contrary, most of us thought we had too few of them, both in the Services and in civil life. Nevertheless, we have it on the authority of no less a person than the President of the Board of Trade that when the war comes to an end we shall be embarrassed by a surplus of blankets. Not only of blankets, of course, but of lots of other things made for the war. But for our present purpose we are content to talk of the surplus of blankets.

It appears that when the war stops the Government will have something in the region of two thousand million pounds of war material left on its hands, and included in that unimaginable sum will be lots and lots of blankets. That's why we have chosen blankets to represent the difficulty facing the Government. Nor should you underestimate the Government's trouble in this respect.

To you it seems quite a simple matter. They have a blanket. You need a blanket. If they give you the blanket they are no longer troubled by it, and if you get it you are no longer oppressed by the need of it. Nothing could be simpler. Or so you think. It is evident you don't understand economics. If you get a blanket given to you, you don't have to buy one, and the man who lives by selling blankets doesn't make a profit. So he is against giving you the blanket. Then there is the man who makes a living earning wages making blankets. If you get the blanket for nothing his employer cannot employ him making blankets to sell to you. So the blanket-maker is against you having a gift of the blanket as well as the blanket seller. Of course, if you were in the Army the blanket would be handed out to you along with your boots and clothes. But that is another story.

What then are we to do with all those blankets? Of course, if the war went on and on there would be no difficulty. We should just go on giving the blankets away to the men and women in the Services and everybody would be happy. But you can't go on having a war merely for the purpose of giving away blankets. Or can you?

You see how complicated the whole problem is, can't you?



That is why the House of Commons spent a whole day discussing it.

It really does make one's head go round and round, doesn't it? It appears that having to live by making wages or profits makes you an enemy of having too much wealth, because a surplus threatens both your wages and your profits. That seems to be the reason why some trade union leaders as well as employers are frightened at the thought of that plenitude of nice blankets.

Of course, there are those wild Socialists who suggest quite another way of dealing with the problem. They point out that when you were an employee of the State in the capacity of soldier, you could have the blankets without worrying anyone. If, therefore, we remained employees of the nation when we got back to civil life it would be possible to go on having the blankets as well as other things without all this upset.

You see, the approach of the Tory to the problem is different from yours. Your mind is not blurred by too much economic theory and therefore you think the main concern should be how to get the largest amount of desirable goods produced with the least human exertion. You see it as the problem of how to use the productive resources of the community to the utmost so as to satisfy the natural desire for an expanding standard of livelihood. That is not how the Tory looks at it. All he is concerned about is how to prevent large-scale unemployment and at the same time preserve the institutions of private property. For this reason the White Paper does not pretend to provide a policy of full employment. That would mean more jobs than men to do them. That is just what a Tory does not want, because it would favour the worker in bargaining for jobs and wages. A certain percentage of unemployed, and therefore a certain proportion of unused productive resources, is regarded by the Tory as a necessary condition for private enterprise and profit-making. Large-scale unemployment, however, is a threat to his continued political domination. Controlled poverty is what the Tory wants, not the abolition of poverty.

For example, when you come home from the war you think that the first concern of the Government should be to provide you and your wife with a decent house with all the modern conveniences that both of you have heard about and sometimes see in those luscious Hollywood films. That is where you have got it all wrong. The idea of the Tories is to build just enough houses to take the edge off the agitation for houses for all, and then



leave the rest until you become unemployed, and therefore a "thermostat," when you might be allowed to start building houses. Mind you, you must stop at once as soon as private enterprise has got something else for you to do. So you see your best chance of having a house is to become unemployed and a "thermostat." The same thing applies to cheap electricity. Your wife would like to have all the modern gadgets science has invented to save domestic labour and which better-off women enjoy. And she would like to be able to afford them without having to put too many shillings in the meter. Again your only chance of getting them is to become a "thermostat." For, as I have already explained, power stations are also the things kept in reserve to be built when the failure of private enterprise throws you idle on the labour market.

Also, should you prove obdurate and insist on the Tories fulfilling their promises of a better time after the war, they have a bogey-man in reserve to frighten you into acquiescence. This bogey-man, at first sight, looks highly respectable. It is built around our need to export. You can take it from me this is going to be the biggest assault the Tories will make on you at the General Election. They are already playing it up in a big way. Let's hear first what the White Paper has to say about it:

"(a) During the war we have obtained a large proportion of our imports first by the sale of our foreign assets and later by lend-lease or on credit. This process cannot continue indefinitely; and if we are to be able to buy the imported food and raw materials which we need to maintain our standard of life, we must expand our export trade. An export drive is thus of paramount importance, and home demand—whether for consumption goods or capital expenditure—must not be allowed to divert the resources needed for exports."

Goods for export are to have priority over every other claim. So that you may appreciate the mind of the Tories on this most important issue, let me give you what Erskine Hill, Chairman of the Parliamentary Tory Party, had to say about it. He was giving his reasons for not supporting the Beveridge Plan: "Now that we have lost many of our investments abroad and—for the time being, at any rate, although it is only for the time being—important possessions in the Far East, we will be infinitely poorer. It would be wrong not to face to what extent we should be poorer, and to realise that many of the reforms, however anxious we are to make them, cannot be made if they will have the effect of putting our finances in a position in which we will not be



able to do justice to those who invested their money in war loan, or to the real welfare of the people of this country whose work depends upon the general prosperity of the country." The logic of that is clear. We are to accept a lower standard of life in order to sell more goods abroad. Now there is sufficient truth in this argument about the need for exports to deceive people into accepting on its face value most of the nonsense talked about it. Of course, we need exports in order to pay for rubber, oil, lemons, tea, bananas, all the tropical and subtropical products which are too difficult, or even impossible, to produce at home. But if we accept a lower standard of life in order to export more goods, by that very act we require less goods from other nations and so make it more difficult for them to buy from us. If we adopt a policy of scarcity here we help to impose it on other nations, and the last result will be worse than the first. The first priority, therefore, should be to make the most of our own productive capacity and encourage other nations to make the most of theirs. Plenty begets plenty, and scarcity begets scarcity. There are two ways of balancing trade between ourselves and other nations—upwards or downwards. Before the war exports represented about one-fifth of our total production. We were doing our best to lift that percentage to a higher figure. At the same time that we were trying to persuade people in other parts of the world to buy increased quantities of goods from us, millions of our own people were going short of these same goods. Now all trade is an act of exchange. Nevertheless, by some twist of the Tory mind, it is good trade to persuade someone in a remote part of the world to buy our goods, but ruinous to allow the same goods to be consumed by our own people.

We are now told by some people who ought to know better that we shall need to increase our exports after the war by fifty per cent. That is to say, we are told we shall need to export thirty per cent. of our total production instead of twenty as before the war. Why? Because, we are told, we have used up our foreign investments in paying for arms with which to fight Hitler. Now who bought the foreign shares we had to sell? In the main it was the U.S.A. Yet a short time ago the Chairman of the American Chamber of Trade in a speech in this country informed us that when the war is over America is going to embark on a great trade drive to increase her exports. Just like us, in fact. So we are setting out on a drive for exports because we have lost our foreign investments, and the nation



—temporarily I hope—lost their sense of direction. In tribute to the House of Commons let it be said that many of its members refused to give this bastard scheme their blessing. Most of the Tories blessed it, including that curious body known as the Tory Reformers. But the Parliamentary Labour Party would have nothing to do with it, in spite of the recommendation of Ernest Bevin.

Emanuel Shinwell asked the Government: "Is this their election manifesto? Is this what they are going to put before the people? If they are going to put this muddled idea before the people without any legislation, and if it is merely going to be a promise, the assurance which the Minister of Labour gave to the men going to Normandy will turn to ashes in their mouths." The spokesman of the Labour Party, Arthur Greenwood, summed up his fears as follows: "If the predominant motive in industry is going to be private gain, you can say good-bye to all hopes of ending large-scale unemployment." Mr. Mack described it as "A worm-eaten prop." Mr. Maxton concluded his speech by saying: "Let the Gentlemen above the Gangway (the Tories) defend their unemployment, their private profit, private enterprise, and capitalism to the electors; let those who hold the Socialist view put that Socialist view to the electors as honestly as it can be put; and then let the electors decide, and whatever Government happens to be returned, let them go ahead on the basis of their own principles and try to make good on them; but do not think that the great solvable problems of the time are going in any way to be determined by bastard practices of this description."

I said on that occasion: "We are told that the State at last admits its responsibility for providing work. We are asked to be breathless with admiration at that great advance. No Government would live for a minute after the war that did not admit it. Do you think that the young men and women who come back from the war would listen to a lot of doddering old gentlemen saying they would have no responsibility whether they worked or not? That is an admission about which we are supposed to be enthusiastic. The fact of the matter is the White Paper is shallow, empty and superficial and bears all the stigmata of its Coalition origin. It runs away from every major social problem. It takes refuge in tricks, strategies, and devices because it has not the honesty to face up to the implications of the social problems involved."



## CHAPTER 5.

### WILL YOU GET THAT HOUSE?

When you were away, fighting in Africa, in India, in Italy or in France, you mustn't imagine there was no fighting going on at home. Of course it was not your sort of fighting, and it was not against the Nazis. It was against YOU. It was an almost silent fight, fought mainly behind closed doors, in conference rooms, and in Government Departments. Only now and again did it emerge into the open where we could see what was going on. Up to the moment I am bound to report that you have lost that fight. "What was it about?" you ask? It was about that home that you and your girl have been dreaming about and writing to each other about. Mind, you have had your champions, but so far they haven't been very successful. Up to now they are well behind on points. Your enemies hope to deliver the knockout blow at the General Election. But by that time I hope you will be able to lend a hand, and if you listen to what I am telling you there is still a chance of winning. It is not going to be easy, I can tell you, because the prize is pretty valuable. It is land; it is who is going to own it and control its use and development. This has a close bearing on that dream house of yours.

If you know anything at all about politics you will now realise why the fighting is so stiff. The private ownership of land and the right to do what they like with it have always been the holy of holies for the Tories. It has been the prize over which many a bitter struggle has been fought. Unfortunately it looks this time as though the Tories will win with less difficulty than they ever experienced in the past. That is unless you take a hand and bring to bear the same clarity of vision and doggedness of purpose which served all of us so well in the fight against the Nazis.

It looked at first as though it was going to be a last-ditch fight for the Tories. The war brought heavy reinforcements against them. Many of our towns and cities were blitzed by the enemy. Hundreds of thousands of houses were destroyed, not to speak of public buildings of all kinds. Before the fly-bomb attack on



London and the South a moderate estimate put our need for new houses at four million. So there were many in the same plight as you. You had plenty of allies. It was clearly impossible even to approach a problem of such dimensions by leaving it to the undirected and uncontrolled enterprise of the landlords and private builders. Before the war, when the problem was much more manageable, the public authorities were driven to build houses for workers to live in because of the failure of private enterprise. Obviously, therefore, private enterprise is unequal to the present unprecedented crisis.

Public opinion has come to realise there is more than one aspect to this question. It is not merely the building of houses. It is also where they are to be built. Between the two wars private enterprise produced a shocking state of affairs. The population was distributed in a most lop-sided fashion. Cities like London and Birmingham were allowed to swell to monstrous size. Workers followed the industries, and industry in its turn followed the workers in an endless snowball growth. Some parts of the country were converted into distressed areas, denuded of their industries, and others became congested, each giving rise to different, but equally grave, problems. To an unprejudiced mind, looking at the whole question strictly from the point of view of how to build what, when and where, it seems elementary common-sense that the first condition of successful planning is for the nation to take over ownership of all land, leaving its owners to continue to use it as before unless it is required for the purposes of the communal plan. It seems an outrageous inversion of values that the right to own and use land in your own way should be allowed to come first before the solution of a problem affecting the wellbeing of the overwhelming majority of the community. But that is not how the Tories look at it. For them private property comes first; the communal interest second. Nevertheless, something obviously had to be done. Towns were being razed overnight and people were naturally anxious to learn what steps the Government proposed to take to deal with their rebuilding immediately the war was over. It was clear things could not be left without plans being got ready to start work at once when conditions permitted. The Local Authorities in particular wanted to know the limits within which they would be expected to work. The Tories resorted to their usual device. They set up one Royal Commission and two expert Committees of Inquiry. The first was the Barlow Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population. The



second was the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas. The third was called the Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment.

It is not necessary for our present purposes to examine the work of those Inquiries in detail for the good and sufficient reason that the Government have not accepted their recommendations, mild and conventional though those were. They never were looked upon by the Government as anything other than stalling devices to hold off the critics and to give an impression of activity.

They served that purpose admirably. For example, as far back as October 18th, 1941, Lord Samuel in the House of Lords asked Baron Reith when action was intended to be taken on the Interim Report of the Uthwatt Committee. The Baron replied that a great deal of work had been done in "embryo." He went on to give the assurance: "We are not going to be caught by the peace. I made it clear enough in July that I thought the problems of peace much more serious than the problems of war, and the Government share my view. The need and the urgency are realised, and my colleagues and I are doing better than we have been able to make known yet, and shortly I hope to be able to give the House more definite news than I have been able to do to-day." By February 11th, 1942, the critics had become impatient and Viscount Samuel moved that "legislation for amendment of Town and Country Planning Acts be no longer delayed." Reith replied: "Special research is the essential foundation of national planning. All the experts are busy. Main principles are emerging. Slow progress is due to the fact that so many Departments have to be consulted." That statement got Reith into trouble. Like Arthur Greenwood he was taking his job seriously. He thought the Government really wanted to prepare for post-war reconstruction. Before the end of the month he was out of his job. He wasn't a good staller. A first-class staller was appointed in his place, Lord Portal. He is still there. His success in preventing anything important being done is outstanding. When he was first appointed, the Bishop of Winchester asked whether his appointment meant any change in the policy of the Government. Lord Portal assured the Bishop it was not so. "It was better," said Portal, "to wait for the Scott and Uthwatt Reports and then introduce legislation." You see, he knew what to say right off.

Unfortunately for the Government the Uthwatt Committee also took itself seriously. By September 9th, 1942, it was ready with



its Report, and the harassment of the Government started again. The struggle for action continued, for you must not suppose that your own champions were altogether idle. You must remember the advantageous position of the Government. In the first place, they knew the attack on them would never reach the point of impairing national unity. This gave them an inexhaustible fund of political blackmail. Furthermore, attempts to get the attention of the country focused upon this inactivity of the Government was rendered more difficult by the drama of the news from the battle-fronts. It is ironical, I know, but it is the fact that the more effectively you fought on the battlefield the harder it became for the opponents of the Government at home to insist on your house being got ready for your return. The prestige of the Government rose just to the extent that you won battles, your victories enabling them to set aside the protests of their critics with a sneer. Indeed, the readiness of the Government to take action in domestic politics receded just to the extent that the fighting went in our favour. That is shown by the records. So that you might appreciate the truth of this I think you should glance at the following time-table ; I could have added much more, but this will serve :—

Sept. 29th, 1942.—Mr. Mander asked Mr. Churchill in the House what action was to be taken on Report?

*Churchill*: Consultation with several Government departments necessary. Paymaster General to be asked to examine the reports.

Oct. 22nd, 1942.—Lord Reith instituted debate in Lords demanding that action be taken at once. No further delay could be justified on main principles.

Nov. 18th, 1942.—Lord Latham asked for legislation without delay.

Lord Portal denied any delay.

Nov. 20th, 1942.—Lord Simon wound up two-day debate on Post-War Planning.

March 30th, 1943.—Mr. Hughes (Carmarthen) asked the Prime Minister whether the Government had formulated its policy on Uthwatt Report.

*Prime Minister*: Examination of Report not yet complete.

Aug. 5th, 1943.—Mr. Mander asked W. S. Morrison if he could announce further progress on Report.

W. S. Morrison was not at present in a position to make an announcement.

Sept. 23rd, 1943.—A meeting of the National Executive of the



Labour Party urged the early introduction and passage of a Bill to give effect to recommendations.

Oct. 21st, 1943.—Lord Mayors and Mayors of blitzed cities . . . Plymouth, Sheffield, Norwich, Southampton, Portsmouth, Birkenhead, Swansea, Bootle, Wallasey, Exeter, Coventry, Salford and Bristol, wrote a joint letter to *The Times* stressing urgency of replanning, complaining that Local Authorities were held up by the failure of the Government to make decisions, and demanded (1) "The passage this autumn of a Bill dealing with at least two points, the compulsory purchase on the Uthwatt basis by public bodies of land needed for public use and welfare, and the acceleration of procedure for entering into possession. The country must not allow the needs of Servicemen and our gallant home citizens to be disappointed by those who would profit by our needs. Inflation of land values, either in bombed districts or in areas nearby seems to have begun, and will create fresh vested interests. Some property owners will not even negotiate with local authorities when the latter lack compulsory powers to buy. Land speculators apparently doubt the Cabinet's intention to give us the square deal promised by Lord Reith when Minister of Works and Planning."

On October 23rd, 1943, Lord Latham, as Leader of the L.C.C., wrote supporting the demands of the above and pointing out that two years had elapsed since the Government had accepted the findings of the Preliminary Uthwatt Report.

March, 1944.—Lord Woolton promised the Lords that the Government's proposals on Reconstruction and the wider issues of Land policy would be placed before Parliament after Easter.

March 17th, 1944.—W. S. Morrison, after struggling with a hail of supplementary questions on the matter, stated: "There are features in the Uthwatt proposals which MAY BE embodied in the proposals ULTIMATELY put before the House."

April 11th, 1944.—Mr. Mander again questioned W. S. Morrison but the latter had nothing further to add to his previous reply.

June 23rd, 1944.—Text of Town and Country Planning Bill issued.

A White Paper on Control of Land Use issued.

Now, before I go on to discuss how far that Bill, if and when it becomes law, will provide a house for you and your family, I think you should learn something further about what will have to be paid for the land on which it is to be built. That is a very important matter for you because it will help to determine



your rent. Here your interest and the landlord's are in obvious and direct conflict. The more he gets for the land, when it is taken over by the housing authority, the higher will be the cost of the house to you. How much is the owner of land to be paid in compensation for its loss to him when it is taken from him for town planning and building? That was the question the Uthwatt Committee had to report upon. As I have already said, the whole problem would be simplified if the land were taken over by the nation. In that case all we would have to do would be to compensate the owner on the basis of its value at a fixed date. If, after that, the land went on increasing in value, as it usually does, the whole benefit of the increase would accrue to the community, that is to you among the rest. But that is just what the landowner doesn't want, and as his political representatives the Tories have been putting up a stiff fight on his behalf. That is, they have been fighting you and your family when you were occupied in fighting the common enemy.

The Uthwatt Committee made that quite clear. They admitted that the logical conclusion was national ownership of the land, and remember, they are not Socialists. Indeed, there was only one Socialist on the Committee. The Tories saw to that. Then why did they not recommend nationalisation? This is the reason given by them: "*Land nationalisation is not a policy to be embarked upon lightly, and it would arouse keen political controversy.*" Between whom? Between Tories and Socialists, of course. But the Socialists favour nationalisation. So we can't have it because the Tories won't agree. In other words, as between you and the landlords the Tories favour the landlords.

So much for that. The next question was how much is the owner of land to be paid when he has to part with it to the public authority? This is what the Committee recommended: "From the point of view of planning the ideal is that the best plans should be prepared, unhampered by financial considerations. As matters stand, the cost falls on the local authority and the plans suffer accordingly. Planning authorities should have every facility for purchasing whatever land may be required for fulfilling their schemes." It is important for you to remember that. The Committee took the view that it was impossible for the promise of the Prime Minister to be realised when he said that our towns and cities should "rise up, beautiful, resplendent, Phoenix-like from the ashes of the dead," unless the local authorities could plan comprehensively. And they could not be expected to do that without taking in all the land they need for the purpose.



What, then, should be paid for the land taken in this way? The Committee recommended that no more should be paid for it than it would have cost to buy it in 1939, that is, before the war began. They went further and said that all land (except agricultural land) should be valued as and from a fixed date. After that, the owner of the land should be taxed 75 per cent. per annum on every increase in value after that date. They went on to recommend that the site value of the land should be revalued every five years. And then the band started to play. Actually the proposals were reasonable and very moderate. Everybody who has looked at this question impartially knows that land increases in value, as a general rule, not because of anything the owner does, but because of the activities of the community. That is why land in a city costs more than in the country. Just because the city is there. Great fortunes have been accumulated by that fact. Fortunes like the Astors', for example, and the Duke of Westminster's. The proposal would still leave twenty-five per cent. of the value added by the community in the pockets of the owners.

When these recommendations were published a shriek went up from the patriotic landlords of Britain. Take the Land Union, for example. The president is the Marquess of Exeter, and among the vice-presidents and members of the Council are the Dukes of Buccleuch, Devonshire and Norfolk, Marquesses of Bath, Titchfield and Normanby, Earls of Strathmore, Jersey and Plymouth, Viscounts Cranborne and Clive and Lord Iliffe. Lord Brocket, describing the purpose of the Land Union, said: "The Land Union believes in private ownership, private enterprise and personal ambition." Addressing the 1943 annual meeting of the Property Owners' Protection Society, Lord Brocket described the Uthwatt Report as unprovoked aggression, and declared it was as much their right to fight it as it was the right of small nations to fight against Germany and Italy. The National Federation of Property Owners "opposed the acquisition by the State of the development rights of undeveloped land . . . because it would mean, in effect, the nationalisation of a part of an owner's interest in land, and thus strike at the very root of the principle of private enterprise in property." David W. Smith, the General Manager of the Halifax Building Society, declared on September 9th, 1943, that their policy was to fight tooth and nail "that concealed measure of nationalisation."

So you see you've had some tough enemies fighting against you whilst you were away. As I told you earlier, private



property in land is the most sacred of all forms of private property for the Tories, and we knew we had no easy proposition ahead of us in securing the land we need for the planning of Britain and the building of the gracious and lovely towns and cities of our dreams. But this time it seemed for a bit that there were so many things on our side that the Landlords were bound to be beaten. Coventry, Liverpool, Swansea, Plymouth, London, and a host of other great towns and cities had been gutted by ferocious bombing. Hundreds and thousands of poor folks had been maimed in their defence. The courage, the endurance, yes, and the gaiety, of the common people of Britain became the admiration of the world. Books and plays and films have been written about them, ardent tributes to the glory of their civilian courage. Then there were the promises made in the early years of the war; the vision of "sunny uplands" which occurred so frequently in the speeches of the Prime Minister; *and always keep in mind he is the Leader of the Party which has the power to carry out all these promises whenever it likes.* As never before in our history, honourable men and women had cause to believe that the hosts were gathered for the defence of the poor, for the common good and for the future welfare of the nation.

Conscious of all this, the Tories played their usual game of wearing down the advocates of immediate action as I have already shown you in the time-table. They waited until the vision faded, the hopes dimmed, and the perorations grew stale with frequent repetition. Then they acted—tardily, meanly, dispiritedly and on a scale monstrously below the level of the need as well as of the opportunity. They would have liked to postpone action altogether, but it was scarcely possible even for them to make no provision of any sort for the rebuilding of the blitzed areas. Their tactics is to buy time by making as small a provision as possible, by way of public effort, so as to leave all possible pickings for private interests. For you must remember real estate, that is land and buildings, is the most loved and lucrative of all forms of property. When you recollect that public assistance scales and unemployment benefit assume that one-fourth of the workers' expenditure is on rent, you will appreciate the size of the stakes at issue.

The Town and Country Planning Bill, introduced into Parliament just before it closed down for the Summer Recess (another illustration of haste) rejected two of the main propositions which had been accepted as the basis of any worth-while plan of build-



ing and development. It confined the schemes of the local authorities within the limits of what is necessary to rebuild the blitzed districts, with additional provision for what was termed "over-spill." That is smaller schemes connected with and part of the first. At one stroke this prevents wide and imaginative planning. It limits the amount of land the local authorities will be allowed to purchase. First victory for the landlords and the first defeat for you in this contest. In the second place it rejected the Uthwatt Committee's recommendation, which I have already described, about the taxation of increased site values. The work of the public authorities will consequently put more money in the pockets of the landowners. The better the local authorities plan, the more money you will have to pay the landlords. Second victory for the landowners.

Thirdly, no additional financial help towards rebuilding, thus further handicapping the poorest districts. Another victory for the rich taxpayer and more squalor for you. Fourthly, no national scheme to co-ordinate the whole. This kills the Scott and Barlow Reports, and all hopes of national planning. A victory for private economic adventure and further anarchy in the distribution of the industrial population. Even such additional powers of land acquisition in the blitzed areas as the Bill gives are available for five years only after the Bill becomes law. By that time the Tories hope you will have been bamboozled into giving them another lease of political power, again leaving them free to do what they like.

These various concessions to propertied interests are so outrageous and so opposed to any effective rebuilding that the local authorities are in open revolt against them. Mr. Louis Silkin, Chairman of the London County Council Building Committee and one of the foremost housing authorities in the country, writing on the Bill in *The Tribune*, described it as "... the touchstone to the sincerity of this Government in its protestations about the post-war world. It is a miserable and mean measure and represents a victory by the land-owning interests over the public interest. If the Labour Party accepts it, even in principle, it will be guilty of having betrayed the hopes of all who have placed their trust in our Movement. We shall be condemned to the piecemeal patchwork method of rebuilding which prevailed before the war. It will have passed a sentence of death upon comprehensive planning for many generations to come." Councillor Tom Nally, of Manchester, equally out-



spoken, declared: "It is a deliberate attempt to sabotage the town planning schemes of the country."

The Tories have also done a characteristic piece of dodging in regard to the Government's promise to pay no more for land than it cost in 1939. They have made this price the minimum as well as the maximum, and even that promise is limited to five years. After that the enormous increase in the price of land which has occurred during the war will serve to increase the cost of all land required for housing after that date. To give an illustration of what that may mean, take this answer given by Tom Johnston, Secretary of State for Scotland, in the House of Commons on October 26th, 1944. Certain Scottish estates were sold for £88,000 in May, 1942, and resold three months later for £120,000. Or again, an advertisement in the *Manchester Guardian* on April 11th, 1944, which offered 2,000 square yards in the heart of Stockport for £1 per yard, equal to £4,840 per acre, about seven times the value of land there in March, 1939. Or again, Manchester bought a farm at Wythenshaw at the end of October, 1943, for post-war housing and war-time farming for £110 an acre—a high price for farm land. An advertiser this April (1944) offers similar land, in a similar locality, a similar distance from Manchester, at £400 per acre. The landlords are not in politics for nothing.

Are you beginning to feel a bit depressed? Well, so am I. It would be so much pleasanter to be able to tell you that everything will be all right. But sunshine talk is no use if it does not correspond with the facts. You will get what you want only if you face up to realities and fight for it. Politics is a tug-of-war between different pressure-groups. You and your family want a house, a modern house, roomy, light, airy, fitted up with work-saving devices. Do you think you are going to get it if things work according to present form? If you do, then you are in for the biggest disappointment of your life. As things are shaping just now you'll be an old man and your wife will be an old woman before you move into a modern house of your own. Oh, I know what some of the newspapers are saying, those whose special line is sunshine, sunshine all the way. Their main object is to drag you into a daydream of long-drawn-out expectancy, and take a chance on what you will do when you wake up.

You'll get what you are man enough to insist upon, and if you like to swallow the nonsense produced for you by the newspapers which serve the Tories, then nothing can save you



from a lifetime of squalor or at best shabby makeshift.

Already you have been told that the first claim on British production after the war is going to be the export trade, with those much-needed homes a bad second. If that happens your chance of a house starts well behind scratch. Then, as I have already proved to you from the words of the Prime Minister, you will not be allowed to start on the job of house building on any scale unless and until you become unemployed and a "thermostat." Do you seriously think that the problem of building homes for the people of Britain is going to be successfully tackled in that way? Have you been told what the size of the job is to start with? Remember the ideal thing from your angle is to have more houses than people wanting them. It is the same with houses as with jobs. If there are two workers running after one job, wages fall. That's why a policy of full employment is so much better than the Tory aim of a high and stable level of employment with a percentage of workers always out of work. If there are two landlords running after one tenant, rents fall. If there are two tenants running after one house, rents rise. That is why rents are so high and have remained so high ever since the industrial revolution, and that is how the Tories would like to keep it. They don't want to solve the problem of housing. They merely want to prevent it from becoming a source of political danger to them. You and they are pursuing different ends, and it is absurd to think you can achieve them by the same methods.

Let us look at a few facts before we find out what the Tories propose to do about them. Remember that during the past five years we have been building practically no new houses. I do not complain. Our hands were full dealing with the Nazis. Even before the war we needed a replacement programme of 200,000 houses a year. In addition to the cessation of building, the enemy has destroyed or seriously damaged more than a million houses. That estimate was made before the fly-bomb attacks. The position has become worse since then. Even to climb back to the housing position we had reached before the war started—and you know how far from satisfactory that was—we require a minimum of four million new houses.

Now I don't tell you those facts so as to depress you further. On the contrary, they represent a challenge and an opportunity. The houses we can now build can be much better than the ones we would have built before the war. Also, Hitler has done a bit of slum-clearing for us. But it must be obvious to you that



our post-war commitments cannot be tackled on the lines of pre-war house building. Yet that is mainly how the Tories propose to tackle it. The Minister of Health, Mr. Willink—you know, the chap who was given office because he did so well against the Beveridge Plan—made a promise the other day in the House of Commons. He told us that in the first year after the war one hundred thousand houses will be built and two hundred thousand would be put in hand—not finished, mind you—in the second year. This promise is what the Prime Minister in his broadcast of March, 1944, described as the first line of attack on the problem. Not much of a blitzkreig, is it? It has taken five years of Governmental labour to give birth to that mouse.

It is also well that you take notice that official spokesmen are beginning to talk in terms of a thirty-year housing programme. That home of yours begins to recede, doesn't it? You see the Tories are quite incapable of dealing with the problem on the scale required. There is always the fixed prejudice at the back of their minds that a shortage of houses is good for the landlord, and there is the further consideration that only public action on a great scale, which gives house building a number one priority, can hope to build the houses within reasonable time. But then public action on such a scale would deprive private enterprise of a most juicy bit of profit-making. So you must wait for your house until the vultures have time to reach the feast.

In the meantime something must be done, or your impatience might boil over into political action, and this the Tories must avoid at all costs. They have therefore decided to take the edge off the housing agitation by a scheme of temporary housing. In his broadcast of March 26th, 1944, the Prime Minister announced this programme in the following passage of his speech: "The second attack on the housing problem will be made by what are called the prefabricated or emergency house. On this the Minister of Works, Lord Portal, is working wonders. I hope we may make up to half a million of these, and for this purpose not only plans but actual preparationse are being made during the war on a nation-wide scale. Factories are being assigned, the necessary set-up is being made ready, materials are being earmarked, and, as far as possible, the most convenient sites will be chosen. The swift production of these temporary houses is the only way in which the immediate needs of our people can be met in the four or five years that follow the war."

There you are, after five years of hullabaloo what you get



by way of a programme with any sense of urgency behind it is steel boxes. Half a million of them. Mind you, it will probably be wise as well as necessary to go in for new types of building materials, not only because some of the new material is better than the old, but also for the reason that it lends itself to pre-fabrication in factories, and so enables the actual house to be built more quickly. But most of the progressive technicians of our generation say it is better to go in for permanent houses straight off. They argue that if we get our plans ready, standardise certain interior parts of the house, like the kitchen unit, stoves, central heating apparatus, and refrigerators, and order them through a central Government buying agency, we can so reduce the cost as to put them in every house. This would also give orders to the factories while they are changing over to peace production and so ease the position of the workers in many industries. Ah, but, you see, this would be a policy of plenty, and the Tories believe in controlled scarcity.

Writing in *Reynolds'* on the Sunday following the Prime Minister's speech, Richard Coppock, the General Secretary of the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, showed how empty was the Prime Minister's contention. He pointed out that before the war the building trade built 300,000 houses a year, by the old methods and with the old materials. And that was with ten per cent. unemployed in each of those years in the summer period and twenty per cent. in the winter. Further, of those employed only about forty per cent. were engaged on house building. "Therefore," said Coppock, "it is clear that if we had priority in organisation of materials, and the balanced distribution of labour, we could produce, with the same amount of labour as in pre-war days, properly co-ordinated, half a million houses per year." Coppock went on to remark bitterly: "We are seriously in danger of drifting into what might be called a 'shelter complex.' It started with the Anderson shelter, went on to the Morrison shelter, and now it seems we are preparing for the Churchill shelter."

The danger about temporary houses is that not only do they serve to take the sense of urgency out of the demand for a really comprehensive housing programme, but they are apt to become permanent. Workers are still living to-day in houses which were built as temporary dwellings at the end of the last war. People are so anxious to have a home of their own that they give support to people who prey on their anxiety, and so find themselves for the rest of their lives living in slums.



You can now see where we have arrived in this business of housing. You can compare the reality with the roseate promises held out four years ago. And, remember, these promises are nothing compared with what the Tories will tell you when the General Election is on. The only protection for you against that barrage attack on your emotions is to realise that the same Tories who will be making those promises have been in power all the time. The safe thing to do is to judge them by their record and not by their speeches. You must keep in mind that a whole army of harpies are gathering to exploit house building after the war. Private enterprise in house building will send rents up to new heights. There are the money-lenders, for example. The Building Societies are gorged with idle money, some fifteen hundred millions of it. Some workers have already been induced to put money down as a first instalment of their future home. Have you ever realised how much the money-lender takes out of your rent? Mrs. Jean Mann, Chairman of the Glasgow Housing Committee, writing in the *Daily Herald*, said that out of nine shillings and ninepence weekly rent, three and threepence represented cost of labour, building materials and land; and six shillings and sixpence was taken by the non-producer for his loan.

I have tried to show you that the most important factor in determining whether you are going to get the home you want, and to get it in reasonable time, is the political one. If you make the wrong political decision you jeopardise your chances of getting it. Politics, as I said before, is a conflict of interest. The interests represented by the Tories are not primarily concerned with building you a house. Their primary concern is to make a profit out of building it, and then afterwards to exploit you as a tenant. If you vote Tory next election you are, in fact, voting against your chances of obtaining the home you want in the place you want it, and at reasonable cost. Do remember that the next time you and your family talk of your dream home.



## CHAPTER 6

### THE MECHANISM OF THE TORY MIND

After all that you are entitled to ask me a question: "Do I think that Tories, considered as men and women, are worse than other people?" I answer at once. Of course I don't. Most men and women are much of a muchness. They are wise and foolish, tolerant and bigoted, selfish and generous, brave and fearful, pitying and pitiless, and many other virtues and failings, all in different proportions in different individuals, and sometimes all at the same time in the same individual. Human beings are complex creatures, and most generalisations about them give little light. Life would indeed be simpler altogether if individuals behaved like the characters in *Pilgrim's Progress*. We could predict with certainty what each one would do in any given circumstance. Faithful would always be true and Mr. Fearing would always be afraid. Certainly life would be simpler that way—and terribly dull.

No, I don't think a Tory, considered as a person, as a private individual, is any worse or better than anyone else. But when you describe an individual as a Tory, you are saying he is a man plus something else, and that something else is the Tory attitude to public affairs, to the principles that he thinks should govern society, to the ownership and distribution of wealth, to education, to tradition—in short, to the whole range of values by which people determine their attitude and conduct in politics. It is never wise to judge a man's ability or views in public affairs on the basis of your knowledge of him as a private citizen. That was a good guide in primitive society, in small social groups, where public and private conduct were practically one and the same thing. In modern society the situation is wholly different. What affects your life most substantially is not how a politician treats his wife or his servant, his children or his friends, but what principles of public policy he supports. The private morals of many of our leading Tories are beyond reproach, whereas their public morals are execrable. In their personal circle they would hesitate to tell lies, yet in public, deception is accepted as part



of their technique of government. When Lord Baldwin (then Stanley Baldwin) admitted in the House of Commons, after the 1935 election, that he feared the Tories would have lost the election if he had told the truth to the people, his Tory supporters were shocked, not because he had deceived the people but because he was loose-tongued enough to admit it. It was not his immorality they objected to, but his garrulity. It is this double code of morals that most distinguishes the typical political Tory from other active politicians. The reason is that the traditional Tory does not look upon himself as the people's representative, because the Tory doctrine pre-dates the rise of modern democracy. The Tory looks upon the rights of the common people merely as a new source of danger to the continued domination of the ruling class. The right of the people to be consulted as to the policies which should be adopted in the State the Tory regards as an unmitigated nuisance, to be dealt with on that basis. Consequently, he never feels he has been guilty of turpitude if he succeeds in deceiving the people, for he has never really, neither in his heart nor in what passes with him for philosophy, conceded that the people have the right to be consulted at all. For him, therefore, public affairs is a sphere of interest, not of morals. Popular government, universal suffrage, rights of agitation and organisation, all those varied activities and institutions which are summed up in the phrase "modern democracy" are alien to the Tory mentality. And, to be quite fair to him, he did his best to prevent them ever happening. He fought a long rearguard action against the rise of modern representative government, and his instinct is always to side with those who are against it. That was why he rejoiced in the destruction of the Republican Government of Spain, and why he connived at and facilitated the rise of Hitler to power. It was why he was open in his admiration for Mussolini and helped that assassin to destroy the League of Nations. It helps to explain why he was so reluctant to fight the Nazis, which he would never have done if Germany had not grown strong enough to threaten the position of this country. Hitler understands this psychology of the British all right, for he sent his emissaries to explain to the English county families, at week-end parties, that he was entitled to their gratitude and not their hostility. After all, had he not destroyed the democratic institutions of Germany?

Never by any chance do the Tories support a struggling democracy in another country. It is here, in the field of foreign affairs, that their essential hatred of democratic forms of government can



be most easily seen at work. That is easily seen by the student. It is not so easy for most ordinary men and women to follow the workings of international diplomacy. Their judgment is blurred by the emotions roused by nationalist sentiments and by a traditional distrust of foreigners, whilst their sources of information are limited by the language barrier, which is so much more important for the product of the elementary school than it is for those who have benefited by a university education, reinforced by foreign travel. Thus, I say, it is in the sphere of international relations the Tories feel it is safest to indulge their detestation of popular government. So strong is this that even in the course of the present war the Tories jeopardised our military prospects over and over again by their reluctance to treat with popular movements abroad, and by their eagerness to come to terms with, and bolster up, reactionary elements in European countries. It is only necessary to call to mind the Darlan incident, the prolonged attempt to buttress King Victor Emmanuel on the throne of Italy, not to mention the persistent sabotage of the partisan movements in the occupied countries, until they became either diluted by "respectable" adherents or too strong to be any longer ignored. "Out of sight, out of mind," is a crude but substantially correct axiom, and the Tories are well aware of it when they openly practise principles abroad they know they would either have had to desist from altogether or conceal in some other guise at home.

It is not possible for anyone to understand the recent history of this country, its present situation, nor its future trends, unless they grasp firmly on to this fundamental conflict between the primitive disposition of the Tory character, and mentality, and the practice of democracy to which he is compelled to conform by historical circumstance. It explains both the stultification of British democracy, between the wars, and the apparent dishonesty and deceitfulness of Tory political conduct. The Tory feels no guilt because he is conscious of no fealty. When he betrays democracy, when he cheats it and debilitates it, he is not capable of remorse nor even of contrition, because he has no kinship with it. It is another world of alien values, into which by the very laws of his nature he is never capable of entering. Surely, you may retort, this cannot be the whole truth. After all, the Tory displayed all the arts of Parliamentary government for centuries. True, but there were Parliaments in Britain long before there was a democracy. The Tories looked upon Parliament as a means by which they could settle differences amongst



themselves, without resort to armed conflict. They never looked upon it as a place where they shared power with the masses, much less yielded power to them. When Keir Hardie went to Parliament in his cap they looked on it as funny before they grew angry with it as a portent. The most popular Labour Members of Parliament, with the Tories, have always been those who plead for mercy for the poor. They have never shown anything but bare-fanged hatred for those Labour Members who want political power for the masses.

It must be obvious that the pre-requisite for the successful practice of an idea is that you should believe in it. How absurd therefore it is to expect democracy to be successful under the Tories. Democracy is poison to the Tory's whole conception of life. Is it reasonable to expect him to make his poison stronger? It is more reasonable and natural for him to do what he does, that is, weaken, undermine and deride democratic government in every way he can and then to blame its failure on the incapacity of the people for government. It is here the danger to the ordinary man and woman arises. With the 20th century the ordinary man stepped into history. You have only to read the history books to see he had little to do with the making of history before that. He was never allowed a say in choosing his place. The rise of political democracy changed all that. Although he is still in a subordinate position he has won the right to be taken into consultation. His present position is, therefore, a dangerous one for him. He is charged with the responsibility for events, but not with the power to shape them. The real power is still in the hands of those who have held it all along. You have only to look at the composition of the House of Commons to see that. The same families are represented there to-day who have ruled Britain for centuries. At each election power passes to the people, and each time they hand it back again to the same people who held it before. The ordinary man is therefore in a double peril. He accepts the responsibility for government but denies himself the power to exercise it. Up to the 20th century he was the drudge of history. He is now the scapegoat as well. His fault consists in not assuming the power which alone can give meaning to the responsibility which political democracy confers upon him.

Instead of this, he is still content to give democratic sanction to those property institutions, ideas and values which belong not to a democratic but to an authoritarian regime. In the past the ordinary man was a compulsory helot. Under our political



democracy he is a voluntary one. The change is profoundly important; but it is a transitory stage. He either steps back to the shadows of history once more or into the light of full social maturity. Property now rules with his permission. At any moment he can withhold it. But he must be brought to realise that he must either make the threat good or withdraw it altogether. It is perfectly true that property cannot rule effectively, in accordance with its own tenets, under a perpetual threat of expropriation. The threat must either pass into action or be removed. A static democracy must die, if only because the people are blamed for the resultant nervelessness of government. Stalemate between contending forces in the State usually ends in the defeat of the people. It was so in Germany and Italy. There the people were persuaded to give away their power precisely because they hesitated to fully employ it.

The people must be brought to see that social affairs are in a bad state, because the people themselves have not clothed the bones of political democracy with the flesh of economic power. Until they do it is nonsense to talk of the people's rule. And, not only nonsense but dangerous nonsense, for it creates in the minds of the people an impression of failure, and inclines them to give back the Imperial purple before they have in fact ever worn it.

The economic structure of Britain is the domain of private adventure. The prime motivator in industry and finance is the property owner, and/or his hirelings. It is he who employs and dismisses. It is he whose wishes direct industrial enterprise and the use of credit. The mass of the people are the creatures of his private plans, they are never privy to them, but are the victims of their consequences. Parliament, therefore, legislates in a framework formed for it by the decisions of individuals who consult no one and nothing but their private interests. Parliament is therefore always after the fact, conditioned by what the City or some great captain of industry decides.

The situation thus created is one of sustained frustration. Parliament debates unemployment when at the same time the instruments of employment are left in private hands. In short, responsibility rests with the people and power with private property. Parliament washes in public the linen which property dirties in private. It is a division of labour ultimately fatal to representative democratic government. It makes the public representative the scapegoat for the bandits of industry and finance, over whose actions he is denied effective control. Par-



liament is the professional public mourner for private economic crimes.

This divorcement of Parliamentary discussion from action brings discussion itself into contempt. If the deed lags too far behind the word then the word itself turns sour. This is the psychological basis of Fascism. Fascism is not a new social order in the strict sense of the term. It is the future refusing to be born. It is the fruit of an aborted democracy. Representative institutions cannot stand by helpless spectators of mass unemployment, preventible poverty and economic anarchy without losing prestige, and eventually their own life. Nevertheless, this is the inevitable fate of a Parliament which denies itself the instrument of action, which are the industries and services of society. By refusing the State effective intervention in the economic activities of society, the Tory is a potential Fascist element in the community. By denying Parliament a vigorous economic life he condemns it to death. It is true he does not always, in his own person, perform the execution, but he prepares the way for the executioners who, at a certain stage, appear in the form of political assassins, now familiarised to us by events on the Continent. These assassins, once in power, are compelled by the laws of their being to keep power by feverishly stirring up the nationalist passions of their people, and by using the surplus production of their industries in the making of war machines. So far, it is true, the British Tory has not brought that fate upon us in this country yet, in all its phases. But he did make a considerable contribution to it abroad, and helped to bring the war upon us. The important thing to bear in mind is that all the phases are implicit in the Tory conception of politics.

During the war the State has been compelled to take over many of the functions normally exercised by private enterprise, and in addition many others quite novel. The private life of the citizen has suffered interference from the State at a hundred and one points. The requirements of total war have led to industrial as well as military conscription. The resultant disciplines have proved irksome and unpleasant in many respects and there is a natural desire to get back to the freedom of action of normal life. It is only in time of war that State action on a great scale is permitted by private enterprise, and by the nature of the case, that action is bound to appear in the form of restrictions on individual liberty and enjoyment. When the crisis is past, a universal nostalgia for the past takes hold of the people. They desire, once more, to buy what they like, where they like, and when they



like. War is always a sellers' market, and when it is over the buyers enter into their own again. The housewife remembers the churlish lack of politeness of the shopkeeper and rejoices that she will no longer have to buy her household requirements in a particular shop. The worker feels free once more to pick his job, and the employer has no longer to go through the formality of asking the leave of the National Service Officer if he wishes to sack a worker. Uniforms are cast aside with a feeling of profound relief. Everywhere, in every walk of life, there is a sense of relaxation and thankfulness for the greater elbow room of peacetime conditions. Added to that, and mightily reinforcing it, comes a universal lethargy, a perceptible slowing down of the collective pulse. The individual feels the world has been too much with him and that he has been too much with the world. A langorous yearning for quietude and privacy invades the spirit of most, and they turn away with impatient resentment from all attempts to persuade them to give their minds to questions of public policy.

This is the moment the watchful political Tory has been waiting for. Two streams in that mood favour his designs. In the first place State action has meant little but unpleasantness for the average citizen. Anything that savours of more State action is therefore likely to be repugnant to him. Furthermore, the improvised conditions of wartime will have produced a contempt for public enterprise in the undiscerning. Extravagantly placed public contracts, the obvious wire-pulling which goes on among business men in their relations with the departments of State, lavish and often unnecessary expenditure by public officials; all State, lavish, and often unnecessary expenditure by public officials; all these help to form a favourable background for the Tory propaganda aimed at releasing industry from public control. The other stream in the mood of the people is the desire to get out of leading strings, back to freedom, adventure and initiative.

It is in these circumstances and against this background that the Tory starts a Freedom campaign. "Away with all Government controls," he cries, knowing that it will find an echo in almost every home. This is the moment which reveals the profound cynicism of the Tory. Suddenly, overnight, the Friend of Franco, Mussolini and Hitler, becomes the champion of freedom. He starts a Parliamentary Committee to examine all Regulations and Orders made by the Government, on the ground that they mean dictatorship by the State bureaucracy. (But if



you watch them carefully you will see they never oppose any Regulation which limits the freedom of the worker. Not one Tory was found in the Division Lobby against Regulation 1A(a) and yet, by that time, they were in full cry against Government by Regulation). Wealthy Tories subscribe generously to funds designed to finance a nation-wide agitation against Government interference with industry and commerce. The Tory millionaire Press carries on a sustained propaganda in defence of the Little Man, oppressed by Orders and Regulations; the same newspapers that thundred against those who wanted to nip European Fascism in the bud, before it developed to the point of war.

By giving himself the appearance of the champion of freedom the Tory hopes to gather behind him all the millions who mean something quite different from what he means by it. It is the mood he seeks to exploit, so that later he will be free once more to hunt in the jungle of economic competition. He wants to empty the State of all the controls which restrain him from unfettered pursuit of profit. Once more he searches for the seductive word which he hopes will give him another lease of political power.

Freedom for the worker means freedom from poverty, insecurity and unemployment. Freedom for the Tory means freedom of action to exploit the workers delivered into his hands by these.

The situation is complicated for the people by the fact that some Tory spokesmen in the House of Commons quite genuinely attack Big Business at the same time that they attack Government interference. The complication will be immediately understood if you remember the conflict that goes on in the world of industry and commerce. There is always a fight going on between the big beasts of prey and the small ones. The small ones quite naturally object to being eaten up by the big ones, so they attack monopolies at the same time that they fight State control. It appears, therefore, from time to time that some political Tories seem to be taking up an enlightened attitude, and to be defending those rules and conventions of Parliament which limit the power of the Government and preserve the rights of Private Members. They are the survivals of 19th century capitalism, warring against the modern tendency to trusts, cartels and combines. Nevertheless, the two sections are always found in alliance when it comes to the principles of freedom affecting the rights of the masses. The difference between them is the difference between animals which hunt in packs and others which are solitary prowlers. They are both equally deadly for the



public welfare. Whatever merits there may be in leaving certain segments of industry to private enterprise is beside the point of this book. The first consideration is to see to it that the dominant role in society is played by public ownership. Once that is accomplished we might be able to afford the luxury of some controlled private enterprise. Once you break the back of the big Tories it might be safe to allow a few of the small ones to crawl around.

I regard this freedom campaign of the Tories as being the most dangerous and subtle of all the attempts they will make to obtain another lease of political power; just because it is aimed at a mood which is the spontaneous product of post-war conditions, and because, as I showed in the first chapter of this book, it succeeded at the close of the last war. In no circumstances should the Left forces in this country allow themselves to be manoeuvred into appearing to be the advocates of regimentation as opposed to freedom.

Whatever shifts and devices the Tory resorts to the problem for him is always the same. It is how to induce the many to vote the few back into power at each election. Or, to put it another way, how to persuade the poor to allow the rich to continue ruling. That, for the Tory, is the art of politics in a political democracy. It is in that art he has been trained, and he approaches it with the coldness of a general surveying the battlefield. A political democracy, based on private ownership of industry, finance and commerce, is an essentially unstable society. It is never able to achieve solidity because its foundations are always shifting. The forces within it are never in a state of equilibrium for long.

Political democracy is, by its nature, a perpetual threat to property. So much was realised by the leaders of the Parliamentary Forces in the English Civil War in the 17th century. I cannot do better than recall the circumstances and the argument of that time, for it states the issue with a clarity which has never been rivalled. The date was August, 1647, and the scene was laid in Putney. The Army Council was meeting to discuss the constitution of the New Parliament. King Charles was in prison awaiting his trial. The Parliamentary Forces had been triumphant in the field and the victors were meeting to share the fruits of their courage and endurance. The Army was divided. Remember it was a political Army. It had been recruited to destroy Monarchism, and the power of the aristocracy behind it. A powerful part of the Parliamentary Army was



the Levellers. They were for no king, no lords, and they had no enthusiasm for bishops. To some extent, their Commander-in-Chief, Oliver Cromwell, was with them. He expressed the view that there "would never be a good time in England until we have done with the Lords." But the Levellers went further than he was prepared to go. Among other radical measures they wanted the new Parliament to be elected on the basis of adult suffrage; one man one vote. They sent a representative to the Council Meeting at Putney in the person of one Colonel Rainbro', a much-loved and gallant man. Oliver had the support of his son-in-law, Lieutenant-General Ireton. Then began one of the most memorable Debates in British History. Said Rainbro': "The poorest he that is in England has a life to live as well as the greatest he." Therefore, neither should have more power than the other. So he argued each should have one vote and no more. Oliver answered and said, no man should have a vote unless he had property. Rainbro' retorted that he conceived there was nothing in the law of God, in the law of man, nor in the law of nature, that asked that any man should give obedience to laws in which he had no share in the making. He asked that if "man should be subject to the laws he should have the representing of them that make the laws." Cromwell replied: "If they who have no goods and chattels make the laws equally with them that hath, they will make laws to take away the property of them that hath." Bitterly Rainbro' answered him: "If it be that all Englishmen cannot be free, and some Englishmen have property, then you have said it, My Lord General, and not me." Rainbro' lost. Property was too strong for him to beat. Four months after King Charles was executed, the Commonwealth Generals provoked a mutiny among the stoutest Leveller regiments and Thomas Rainbro' lost his life.

It has taken almost three centuries for the situation feared by Oliver Cromwell to unfold itself fully upon the British political stage. The three elements are now present: Democracy, property and poverty. There is no rest between them; rather a ceaseless struggle and ferment. Here is the matrix of the problems of modern society. From the uneasy alignment of those three elements flow, in varying nuances, most, if not all, the manifestations of politics to-day. Cromwell saw, with clear vision, what is still hidden from so many even now. The Tories have seen it. That is why they fight democracy wherever and whenever they can. There is no compromise possible between



these three discordant forces. They are the solvent of the nations and societies which refuse to yield to their logic. They pronounce the death of Coalition Governments even before these are born. They are the imperative of politics, and those who ignore them have neither a sense of direction nor an abiding purpose to fulfil. They speak across three centuries, the wisdom of Thomas Rainbro'. "Either poverty must use democracy to destroy the power of property, or property in fear of poverty will destroy democracy."

I have done my best to do what I promised at the outset; to give you an idea of how the Tories have managed to hold on to power, and why. The rest is up to you. When the Election comes a carefully prepared attack will be made on your emotions and your judgment. It will be so much more difficult than fighting the Nazis, and perhaps not less dangerous if you take a long view. You may have laughed at the 1914-18 generation, and the way it was deceived. Watch you are not caught the same way. Or, it may be, that the day will come when, a generation from now, you will be seeing your young son off to fight yet another war from which you were not wise enough to protect him.



# POSTSCRIPT TO THIS BOOK

SINCE the completion of this book two new White Papers have been added to the list: one on Social Security and the other on Industrial Injury. Their appearance, however, in no way invalidates, nor even modifies what I have written. On the contrary, it is confirmed.

The Government have taken two years, since the publication of the Beveridge Report, to prepare their own proposals. That is to say four years in all have been devoted by the Government to a study of this question of social security. At the end of this time what do we get? A definite scheme, framed as a Parliamentary Bill and Parliament invited to pass it into law? Oh, no. We get just another White Paper.

The most significant thing about these two last White Papers is not what they say, but the time of their appearance. They are published at a time when the political parties are already busy over the impending General Election. Their main purpose is to influence votes.

When the Tories extol their virtues at the Election ask them "Why did you not do all this before? If they are as good as you now say they are, why have you withheld their benefits from us for so long? All the time you had the power to do these things, and you twisted and delayed. Now you come to us and ask us to send you back to Parliament to carry them out. Why should we trust you to do in the future what you would not use your power to do in the past?"

A. B.